

Masquerading Flyer *by* I.A.R. Wylie

AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE

STRAITS

AUG., 1918
20 CENTS

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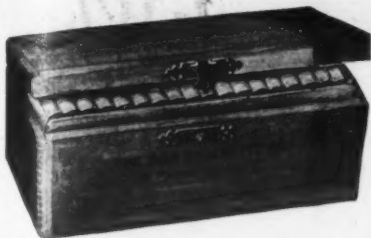
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Ainslee's for September

NO devotee of entertaining fiction can afford to miss the September number of AINSLEE'S. It will contain a larger quota than usual of carefully selected features.

The complete novelette will be "The God of Fools," by Josephine A. Meyer. This strong story of modern American life is one of the best we have offered in a long time. The situation is that of the eternal triangle, but it is developed with an originality that insures the attention of the reader being held from start to finish. The author is rapidly winning a reputation in the magazine field. She is also a dramatist and actress, and was formerly connected with the Washington Square Players.

The short stories in the next number will include the following:

"Bill Heenan, Guardian," by William Slavens McNutt, a welcome addition to the series of Bill Heenan tales, which readers of AINSLEE'S have enjoyed during the past two or three years.

"The Lottery," by Arthur Crabb, a sparkling modern story, and a worthy successor to "Eyes" by the same author, in the present issue.

"The Greater Drama," a page from present-day theatrical life, by Elizabeth Newport Hepburn.

"With the Honors of War," by F. E. Bailey, the last of the fascinating series which we have been publishing under the general title of "Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat."

"The Street of Lost Memories," by Robert W. Sneddon, a tale about an old Frenchman in New York, which will touch the heartstrings of the most jaded magazine reader.

There will also be a further installment of the popular May Edginton serial, "Angels," and articles by Anice Terhune and Alan Dale.

AINSLIE'S

VOL. XLII.

AUGUST, 1918.

No. 1.



The Masquerading Flyer

By I. A. R. Wylie

Author of "The Duchess in Pursuit,"
"The Meeting of the Ways," etc.

CHAPTER I.

IT was at the most critical moment that the thing happened. Brian Wyatt, on the wonderful piebald Cut-and-run, with a clear field and the ball to himself, seemed a sure winner. In fact, his side had already pocketed the goal when the pony stumbled and turned what appeared to be a complete double somersault.

From the spectators massed round the field like a bank of many-colored flowers, there sounded a long-drawn "A-h!" of mingled horror and pleasurable excitement, such as has been heard on similar occasions since gladiatorial days. The pony lay still. The rider scrambled promptly to his feet and gave a reassuring wave, which somehow savored of sarcasm. The captain of the opposition rode up to express polite regrets. The dead pony was efficiently removed, a fresh pony brought on to the field, and the game resumed. The flowers waved their heads softly to and fro and gave way to emotion.

"I can't think how he escaped! But then he's as supple as steel."

"Yes, isn't he? How wonderful that you should think of that simile! Or is it metaphor? I never know. And he's so brave! Did you see how he got up? As if nothing had happened!"

"I call him the Darling of the Gods—after a play, you know. He has everything, hasn't he? Not just money, but health and good luck and brains and courage."

The more sober element in the border grumbled a modifying assent.

"He's like steel, all right. 'Hard' isn't the word for him. I'd rather try and get a fiver out of a Jew than out of Wyatt. I don't know what people go so crazy about."

The flowers laughed delicately.

"And they say women are more jealous than men!"

There was one member of the crowd who had neither exclaimed nor commended, nor, in fact, shown any trace of feeling during the whole incident. She sat in the first row, between a stout gentleman, who was evidently conscious that he looked a typical John Bull and was trying hard to live up to it, and a fair young man whose well-fitting top hat none the less appeared far too big for him.

She herself was like an English garden rose set amidst hothouse orchids and camelias. She was expensively, but quietly dressed; the fair, waving hair under the shady hat was done up with an eye to its own character and none to fashion; her complexion and the strong, fine curve of her lips had

borrowed nothing of their loveliness. Women from other climes might have been smarter, more rigidly trim. But at their best they could not have matched her as a human being. The frank, straight glance of her blue eyes, the unconscious dignity with which she carried her small head, were in themselves beautiful. And one knew that she would grow more lovely with the years.

When the pink-and-silver-clad rider had gone headlong, her lips had tightened a little, but that was all. And presently, when the unhorsed knight, now sobered to the Bond Street ideal, made his appearance at her side, she smiled faintly up at him in welcome, as if to be thrown, rolled on, and kicked by a pony in its death throes was a healthy and everyday occurrence.

Brian Wyatt waited. His attitude and the expression on his lean, weather-beaten face somehow or other lifted the youth with the abnormal top hat out of his seat; whereat Wyatt promptly and without invitation took his place, and the deposed one, having hung about ruefully for a minute, evidently bewildered at his own conduct, departed in search of better fortune. The John Bull gentleman, after a quick, recognizing glance at the newcomer, turned his attention entirely in the opposite direction.

"Well?"

"Well?"

"I'm waiting for you to say something sympathetic."

"Why should I be sympathetic?"

"Well, for one thing, there's Cut-and-run, you know."

"I was told the poor little fellow was beyond reach of human sympathy."

"What about me? He was my best pony."

"You can buy another."

"By Jove, so I can! One can buy anything. Still, if I hadn't been as

hard as nails, they'd have carried us two off the field together."

"But as you are as hard as nails, they didn't."

"Not very kind, are you?"

"I'm sensible."

"Hm. When I was coming along, quite a lot of women risked their complexions over me. And one of them squeezed my hand."

"What did you feel?"

"Sick."

"Do you want me to make you sick, too?"

He snapped his absurdly long-lashed green eyes in appreciation.

"By Jove, it is refreshing to find a woman with a new method! No, I don't. It would be the shattering of my last hope."

She did not answer. She was gazing straight in front of her at the field, gayly sprinkled with the departing spectators, and her brows were faintly severe. He leaned toward her.

"Let's go and get married," he said.

"I've got the license in my pocket. It'd be an enormous joke on the world. I believe it's the only thing that could possibly amuse me just now. It occurred to me the other day—a great idea. We'll just walk out of here, and the thing that ninety-nine mothers have been plotting and dreaming about—with suitable variations—will have been accomplished. What do you say?"

She looked at him suddenly.

"You can be a cad, Mr. Wyatt—when you try."

"I'm practical," he asserted, smiling and unruffled. "I say what I think and I do what I want to do. I find it saves time. I want you, for instance, and I know that you like me. You do, don't you? Own up."

"I like you in parts—like the curate's egg," she admitted dryly.

"And the parts you don't like are gilded over," he added.

"No. They're not. At least it's what

you call the guilt that I don't like. When I look at you, I often think of a fine statue that has been painted over by some bright, shiny, poisonous stuff which is eating away the fineness underneath. And I hate it. Just because I do like you, I'm sorry."

He chuckled.

"Don't say you hate my money, dear. It's so exactly the sort of thing a good, sweet woman ought to say."

"But I do say it." She met his mockery unflinchingly. "And because it's true, I shan't marry you."

"If I lost it—my money—then? No, don't! I always want to think of you as being a little different from the rest. It's so commonplace. It's the sort of thing people say in novels. My dear, how proud, how glad I should be if you were really honest!"

"And said, 'Brian, is it really a hundred thousand a year?'"

He nodded gravely, and she looked away from him.

"Well, you see, I'm not interested. I'm not going to marry you."

"Yes, you are."

"Why do you think so?"

He shrugged his shoulders. His eyes were kind, rather sleepy, and altogether satirical.

"Things usually happen as I want them to."

"You don't believe in people."

"I do. I believe in them intensely."

"You believe in their greed, their meanness, their venality. Well, I'm not going to marry you."

"You said that before," he remarked amicably.

Miss Fairclough rose to her feet, and the elderly gentleman on her left rose with her. She took his arm and bowed in Wyatt's direction. The latter stood, hat in hand, his head a little on one side, his eyes twinkling.

"You won't forget the twenty-fifth, sir?"

"I never forget the prospect of a

good dinner," retorted Mr. Fairclough bluffly. To his daughter he added, as they threaded their way through the eddying crowd, "That young man seemed positively in earnest for once."

"He was proposing," she explained.

"I know, my dear. Frankly, I heard."

"I thought you were asleep."

"I can hear better with my eyes shut. Matter of concentration. In your place, my dear, I think I should have struck while the iron is hot. But you know your own business best."

"I'm not going to marry him," she said rather wearily. "I was in earnest; too."

Mr. Fairclough stopped a minute and then walked on more slowly. His air of bulldog good humor and rather childish honesty had thinned. He looked perplexed, ruffled, and unexpectedly astute.

"My dear, I thought you liked him."

"I do. It's his money."

"Surely not an insurmountable obstacle. Besides—" Mr. Fairclough regained his rugged virtue at a stride. "What does money matter?" he demanded. "Love is everything. Love makes the world go round. Love in a palace is as beautiful as love in a cottage. Love, my dear—"

"But I don't love him as he is," she objected, sighing.

Mr. Fairclough sighed in sympathy.

"Well, well, it's your life, my dear. I don't pretend—I'm an old man. A grave responsibility, too. Glad to see you settled. And then there's Sanders. Dear me, I had forgotten Sanders. I had practically promised—I said I was sure of getting Wyatt on the board of the new company. So important to have a man of his position. The public trusts dollars more than good names. Sad, but true. And Wyatt's so painfully incredulous. Thinks everybody is after his money. Positive misanthrope. A woman's love—might have

cured him. And now he'll be offended. Dear, dear, it's all very trying! All for the best in the long run, no doubt, but trying in the meantime. Your poor old father has great difficulties, Elizabeth. I'd have given anything——"

"Would you give me—against my will?" she asked gravely.

"Oh, God forbid!" said Mr. Fairclough with fervor. "Besides," he added as an afterthought, "nowadays it wouldn't be legal."

CHAPTER II.

Even in a nightmare, nothing so thoroughly disconcerting had ever happened to him before. He had run into Lewisohn at the bottom of the Haymarket, and from that point to St. James' Street, that gentleman, gesticulating much more than is considered nice in English society, his much too shiny top hat much too far back on his much too shiny head, kept pace with his victim with a pertinacity which explained the survival of his race under the most malignant historical persecution.

Undoubtedly it was open to Mr. Eversleigh Wishard to club his companion over the head or to spring into a passing taxi, but the former expedient was too ostentatious and the latter ineffective. Knowing Lewisohn as he did, he had not the slightest doubt but that he would participate in the spring, and to be seen driving with a money-lender is more compromising than to be seen walking with one. So there was nothing for it but to stride ahead ruthlessly and pray to Providence.

Mr. Lewisohn, heated by the pace, but quite unoffended, waved apologetic hands.

"God knows—nothing would make me—bother an old friend—if I could help it," he panted. "I know that it's not cricket—between friends—this sort of thing—and as an Englishman—I—

always like to play the game. But also I have a wife and children, Mr. Wishard, and you are a rich man——"

"I'm not," Mr. Wishard interrupted bitterly.

"Well, then, there is your cousin—a millionaire."

"What's the good of a millionaire, if he isn't you?" was the involved, but profound answer.

"God knows," persisted Mr. Lewisohn, "if you were really hard up, I wouldn't say a word—not a word."

Mr. Wishard grimaced.

"No—you wouldn't. If you had not been sure of getting your money back in the long run, you wouldn't have lent it to me."

Mr. Lewisohn dodged round a lamp-post to avoid collision and came up unruffled on the other side.

"If I hadn't to meet a bill myself—this very week—God knows——"

"Oh, stow it!" Mr. Wishard, exasperated into vulgarity, came to a halt and, screwing his eyeglass more firmly under the fat eyebrow, faced his tormentor with the resolution of despair. "Now look here—what is it you want me to do? Out with it! You know my resources. If you can suggest any way of improving them, I should be grateful."

Mr. Lewisohn beamed with child-like satisfaction.

"My dear friend, it's so very simple. Your cousin——"

"My cousin is no good. I've told you that. He gives me an allowance, and that's all I've got to expect. He's told me so, and when Wyatt says a thing, he means it. Besides, I don't know a meaner, more close-fisted skunk in England."

Mr. Lewisohn put his head on one side and looked subtle.

"My friend, that's where you are wrong. There's not much in the money world that I don't know, and I know that Mr. Wyatt gives like a prince

when there's no one looking or expecting. He doesn't give to his friends. True. That, also, I understand. Mr. Wyatt is almost a *nouveau-riche*. His father made his pile in boot polish. Now a man whose people have had money for generations doesn't think about it and doesn't think any one else is thinking about it. It's as natural to him as air. But a man born in a slum can't get used to it. If he's a common sort, he brags; if he's a gentleman, he's afraid. The stuff gets on his nerves. Mr. Wyatt is like that."

"'Pon my word, you are a fellow!" Wishard interjected. "Fancy your knowing such a lot!"

"He thinks every one is after his money," Lewisohn proceeded, much flattered. "Of course they are, but most people wouldn't bother about it. He distrusts every one. Well, it's your business to teach him he's wrong. You've got to show him you love him for himself——"

"But I don't."

"—and that he ought to have faith in people."

Mr. Wishard looked at once bored and worried.

"How can I? I don't believe in them, either."

Mr. Lewisohn shook his head.

"A great mistake. In business always have confidence. Believe in the other fellow, and he will believe in you. For instance, I took your word, didn't I, my dear friend——"

"And fifty per cent interest," Mr. Wishard added gloomily.

Mr. Lewisohn spread out his hands.

"That is just what I mean."

At that moment, a belated Providence in the dual form of a motor bus and a policeman came to Mr. Wishard's rescue. The motor bus had done something it shouldn't, and the policeman was annoyed, and between them they made a block in the traffic through which Mr. Wishard darted with the

agility of a fish. Providence, still playing up, settled the dispute just as Mr. Lewisohn was about to plunge in after him, and the procession flowed forward, threatening the pursuer's toes, which were promptly withdrawn into safety.

On the other side of the road, Mr. Wishard hailed a taxi and, hidden in that vehicle's protecting shadow, took breath. It had been a disconcerting episode, but it had also provided food for thought, and accordingly he thought hard as they traveled toward Park Lane. If it were true that his impossible cousin were playing Haroun-al-Raschid in secret, then there was obviously some hope. Something might be done. It was a case for psychology, which Mr. Wishard took to be the scientific term for the art of pulling other people's legs.

He was still brooding when Wyatt's butler ushered him into the anteroom of the young millionaire's Park Lane mansion. In some such magnificent surroundings, the *Roi Soleil* had probably kept his courtiers and petitioners dangling. In much the same mood of suspicion, mutual distrust, and restlessness as that of Wyatt's callers, the courtiers and petitioners had no doubt waited for their admission to the royal presence. The walls were lined with all sorts and conditions of men, from a bishop down to all shades of the professional beggar, and they all stared at Mr. Wishard—who, as a privileged person, took precedence—with expressions of most bitter dislike.

Wyatt was not alone. A sad-looking little man with a very big head and a disorderly mop of gray hair and anxious manners stood on the other side of his table and gesticulated. He had a heap of draftsman's paper in front of him, which he indicated from time to time with a dirty finger.

After a friendly nod in Wishard's direction, Wyatt continued to stare

absent-mindedly out of the window. He did not seem to be listening at all. His square chin rested on the palm of his hand, and his face, seen in the light of Lewisoohn's recent observations, had a certain harassed, careworn look which Wishard had never noticed before. Hitherto, Wishard had always considered his cousin to be an ugly brute, as hard as nails, but there was undoubtedly something about him—an extreme sensitiveness of mouth and nostril—which was distinctly hopeful.

"I'm not asking you for anything, Mr. Wyatt," the gray-haired individual stated in a tired voice. "I'm offering you something. It's the chance of a man's life. It means not only a revolution in aerial warfare, but in commerce. I need a man with money and courage and a sporting instinct, and I've chosen you."

The butler opened the door.

"Time, sir," he announced stonily.

Wyatt came to life. He detached an already filled-in check from a book and tossed it across the table.

"That's all I can do, Mr. McCormick," he said.

The old man took up the slip in his shaky fingers.

"I beg your pardon—I don't understand——"

"Every one who gets here between eleven and twelve gets three guineas. It's my rule. Like most rules, there's no sense to it, but it saves trouble."

"Mr. Wyatt, I didn't come here for charity."

"I know you didn't. You came here to offer me the chance of a lifetime. That's what they all do. On my twenty-first birthday, I was offered five chances like that, and in my youthful fervor I backed them all. Well, one grows older."

Mr. McCormick tore the check slowly across and across and laid the pieces on the table. He gathered up his drawings and his shabby broad-

brimmed hat. Wishard, who, like most people who have never done anything for anybody in their lives, was intensely sentimental, thought the old man's bearing dignified and pathetic. Not that he believed in its sincerity, but he sympathized. His cousin was legitimate game. They were all comrades in the hunt and had a fellow feeling when their prey slipped through their fingers. He almost winked as the defeated suppliant passed him.

At the door, Mr. McCormick turned and gave a sad little bow.

"Perhaps you'll think it over," he said.

"I never think things over," Wyatt answered.

As the door closed, he pushed an ebony box of cigarettes across the table.

"Help yourself. They're unique. I can give you just three minutes. If I showed too much favoritism, there'd be a riot. However, three minutes is enough for most requirements. Just say what you want, my dear fellow."

Mr. Wishard, who was not very tall and already rather rotund, drew himself up.

"What an old fiend you are, Brian! Can't you imagine somebody not wanting anything?"

"No. I'm not a novelist. I'm a millionaire."

"That's cynical. You're beastly cynical, Brian. It's a poisonous state of mind. As a matter of fact, I just came to have a look at you."

"Well, you've had a look at me," Wyatt observed good-humoredly. "What next?"

Mr. Wishard shook his head. He perched himself on the corner of the mahogany table and swung a stout leg reflectively.

"I've been thinking a lot about you, old chap," he said. "I suppose it's cheek of a poor devil like myself to worry about a child of the gods like

you, but I can't help it. You're not happy. I've been watching you, and you're not a bit happy. In fact, you're damn miserable. In fact, I believe I'm a lot happier than you are, though, Heaven knows, I have my worries."

"Debts again?" Wyatt queried. "Well, I told you I wouldn't pay them and I won't."

"I don't want you to," Mr. Wishard retorted with injured gravity. "You don't understand people a bit, you know, Brian. You've got a bee in your bonnet. Your money has gone to your head. You're drunk with it, and you see everything upside down, and it makes you beastly unjust. That poor devil of an inventor, for instance. I don't know what he wanted you to take up—"

"An aeroplane. Two passengers. Luggage. America in fifteen hours or something equally mad."

"Well, even if it was mad, the man was sincere. Look at the way he tore up your check."

"The clever ones do that," Wyatt interjected wearily. "They tear up your checks or—they turn you down. It's a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*. It all comes to the same thing in the end."

He had gone back to his old position, his face turned to the window, and Mr. Wishard, who, in his new rôle of psychologist, was becoming diabolically astute, had a most illuminating view of the rather rugged profile. Also, he was thinking hard. What class of person is in a position to "turn down" millionaires? A woman. Good! In love, then? Excellent! People in love, even if they are misanthropes, are always more amenable to treatment.

"You know," said Mr. Wishard earnestly, "you're on the wrong tack, old chap. You are really. I don't deny that there are cadgers and beggars and hangers-on in the world, or even that the best of us aren't ready and grate-

ful for an occasional fiver. Like myself, for instance. But we won't sell ourselves—no, by Jove, we won't! We won't sell our friendship. In fact, it often amazes me how little we will sell. At the bottom, we're an astonishingly sincere lot. Take women, for instance. A real, fine woman, even if she does love the good things of life, won't marry for them. You'll find that out for yourself one of these days, and you'll admit I'm right. You'll be sorry—"

"I'd be glad," Wyatt interrupted. He got up and stood by the window with his back turned. "I'd like to believe—but I can't. There's only one proof I could accept—and that would cost too much."

This was involved. But Mr. Wishard, with the clew in his hand, proved equal to it.

"You mean you'd have to lose a woman to believe in her? Stuff and nonsense! You've got to get a new point of view—that's all. You've got to trust people—believe in 'em"—Mr. Wishard's voice grew slightly tremulous—"the dignity of human nature and all that. Trust your instinct. Forget your millions."

"Don't talk balderdash! I can't."

"Chuck 'em away, then," said Mr. Wishard, with a reckless gesture.

"Try chucking them away yourself."

"I wish I could," Mr. Wishard declared with engaging bluffness. "Well, anyhow, pretend to chuck 'em away," he suggested, spurred by inspiration, "and just see what happens."

There was no sign from the figure by the window. The footman opened the door again, giving his customary warning, and Mr. Wishard slid gracefully off the table.

"You're a poor devil, Wyatt. It's a contradiction in terms, but I repeat it. You're a poor devil."

"What did you *really* come for?" Wyatt asked over his shoulder.

"And I'm damn' sorry for you," Mr. Wishard concluded, as he passed with dignity into the anteroom.

CHAPTER III.

Lady Fetterley, who was always ready to play hostess for the consideration of a good dinner, gave the signal, and amidst a subdued scraping of chairs and the fragrant frou-frou of soft stuffs, the feminine element withdrew to a more rarefied atmosphere.

Wyatt himself held the door open, and as Elizabeth Fairclough passed him, he bent toward her, smiling.

"Just five minutes. You will, won't you? I want to show you that old portrait."

She did not answer, save by a faint movement of her fine head, and her expression was more troubled than the occasion seemed to warrant. She passed on quickly, and Wyatt closed the door and went back to his place at the head of the table. The incident had not lasted half a minute, but it had not escaped Mr. Fairclough, who was apparently absorbed in the astonishing qualities of his cigar. He drew his chair a little closer to his host's, so that the gap between him and his neighbor widened. The movement was artlessly confidential.

"This sort of thing makes a happy man of me," he said. "A perfect dinner. You're too young yet, Wyatt, to know what food means. When you're my age, you'll find that a well-cooked meal is the only illusion left you."

Wyatt glanced down the length of the polished oak table. His eyes lingered quizzically on each of his guests. Made genial by exquisite wines and charmed by their environment of unstinted beauty, they had already dropped into easy attitudes, and conversation, at first intermittent, grew to a steady hum.

"I have no illusions," Wyatt re-

marked lazily. "Even food is an unveiled mystery. My mother kept a fried-fish shop before we began to make money in boot polish, so I know too much about that sort of thing. No, I really haven't an illusion."

"That in itself is an illusion," Mr. Fairclough returned, blinking good-humoredly through wreaths of amethyst smoke. "You're suffering from the malady of youth, dear fellow. You believe you don't believe. Well, some one will come along and teach you better. In the meantime, you ought to throw yourself into something, work, take a place in politics—in business. For instance, there's that new company I was telling you about. A wonderful opening. Positively patriotic. Now, if you were to put your back into it——"

"I never speculate," Wyatt interposed, with his ironic little smile.

"No one wants you to. It's not your money we need. It's your brains, your integrity, your personality. These things inspire confidence."

"You mean to say that without my money I should inspire confidence, friendship, affection?"

"Of course I do."

Wyatt leaned forward a little, lowering his voice.

"It's very kind of you to say so, but my natural modesty makes me incredulous. I confess that if it could be proved, I should feel very different about things. I might even take an interest in your company. As it is, the thought of playing the gilt on your gingerbread bores me. There's only one thing I want just now, and I can't quite understand why I don't get it. I wonder if you could explain. It's rather an unusual question at dinner, but as I'm going to propose again in a few minutes, I should like to have some idea now why your daughter persists in refusing me."

Mr. Fairclough suppressed a gasp. He found this young man rather try-

ing. His cynicism, his directness, his imperiousness, were positively brutal.

"Confound the fellow, if it wasn't for his money, I'd kick him!" was Mr. Fairclough's private comment. Outwardly, under Wyatt's cool stare, he raised a smile of extreme worldly wisdom.

"My dear fellow, you're charming, quite charming. It shows how little you know women. Now I'll tell you something strictly between ourselves. Elizabeth likes you—more than likes you. If you were Tom, Dick, or Harry, she'd marry you to-morrow. But then there's your money. It lays her—her motive, her affection—open to suspicion. In self-defense, she's bound to refuse you—at first."

"You think—in the end—she'll marry me?"

"Sure," said Mr. Fairclough.

"I'm so irresistible?"

"Absolutely."

For the life of him, Mr. Fairclough could not suppress a twinkle that was to all practical purposes a wink. It seemed perfectly obvious to him, and he knew it was equally obvious to his companion, that a millionaire must be irresistible. Then why pretend? Nevertheless, he had a subsequent feeling that he had not played the right card. Wyatt sat back again, and a look of weariness and unutterable boredom shadowed his lean face.

"I'm immensely relieved," he said.

Half an hour later, he beat a casual and unobserved retreat toward the gallery. The house had formerly belonged to an exceptionally blue-blooded earl, and Wyatt had bought the family portraits for an exorbitant sum. They were old and dull and ugly. Nevertheless, as the young man came into the carefully modulated light, he saw that one person at least had found them interesting—so interesting, in fact, that she did not even hear his approach. She stood facing the ugliest of them all

—an Elizabethan gentleman of amazing stiffness—her hands resting on the brass rail, her fair head thoughtfully tilted. In her white dress and against the shadowy background, she was as radiant and immaterial as a returned spirit.

He came noiselessly over the parquet floor and stood near to her. His fawn-like, steely grace of body and the rather cruel mischievousness of his expression made him a striking pendant to her exquisite simplicity. He did not speak for a minute, but watched her, his eyes half closed, his lips curved with suppressed laughter.

"Are you admiring my ancestors?" he asked softly.

She did not start. He wondered if her absorption had just been an attractive pose, for she did not even look at him.

"They're not your ancestors," she said.

"My father bought them," he retorted.

"Buying ugly ancestors is silly," she said. "Everybody has ancestors—and they're nearly always ugly."

"Can you imagine mine?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "I can imagine them quite well. They must have been little, strong, anxious people, always hoping that their sons would be better than themselves. They waited for generations. They were so poor and so obscure that no one dreamed of painting their portraits. And then at last the dream came true. A great man was born to them. He climbed right up to the very top and dragged everybody up with him." She broke off, sighing. "What a pity!"

"What's a pity?" he asked.

"You are," she said promptly.

"Because?"

"It must be so hard to fight your way to greatness—to become an ancestor of whom your sons and grandsons might be proud—and then to have nobody to

follow you—nobody to be proud—like your father."

"So I'm 'nobody'?" he persisted.

"You're awfully rich," she answered.

He leaned his back against the rail, his hands thrust in his pockets, and surveyed her thoughtfully.

"You look so gentle, so beautiful, so kind," he said. "One can't conceive of your really saying anything to hurt. And yet, underneath, you're a tigress—no, a lovely white Persian with long, sheathed claws which you dig into people you hate. And I believe you hate me. You said the other day you liked me—in parts—but I don't believe it. I believe you just hate me."

"I believe I do, too," she answered. "I like you sometimes—on horseback, riding to hounds, looping the loop over my head, doing things, being somebody—somebody with nerve and pluck and daring. Then for a moment I forget that you're a money bag. You're a man." She turned on him in a gust of indignation. "Oh, why aren't you somebody always? Why don't you *do* things—great things—so that one could be proud, so that one day unborn people will look up at your picture—just as faded and quaint as this one here—and feel thrilled and inspired? You have an opportunity that in itself is an inspiration. You're free. You have no care, no anxiety, to hamper you. There's nothing you couldn't do—nothing you couldn't become—"

He cut short her eloquence with a shrug.

"That's just it. I can become anything. I've only to wink an eye, lift a finger, give a hint, and there's nothing I am not. Already I'm the world's finest aviator, the best polo player, the most able, powerful, beneficent, virtuous figure in modern history. Ask any halfpenny rag if it isn't true. And I'm not yet thirty. What more do you want? What can ambition

offer? I have out-Alexandered Alexander—"

"I hate you!" she interrupted. "I hate you like this—in your perfect clothes, coated with money, surrounded by beautiful great things that you've stolen—that can never really belong to you—with your air of cynicism, of contempt! You despise everything—every one! Even now you're despising me!"

He shook his dark head teasingly.

"I'm asking you to be my wife."

"And if I consented, you would despise me more. Contempt would crystallize gradually into hatred."

"You're wonderfully clear visioned, dear."

"Yes. I must be. In the end I should lose you—whatever love you have for me—as surely as if I never saw you again."

"Would you mind that, Elizabeth?"

He bent closer to her, his eyes very bright, and she faced him courageously.

"Yes, I should. I want the man I like to like me—to believe in me, even against his will. I'm not going to hurt him, weaken him, by marrying his enemy."

"His enemy? That's—that's the other fellow, eh? The money-bagged misanthrope? And supposing that upstart were finally routed—smothered in his own shekels, choked with his own cynicism—would you marry the brave young hero—the man who can ride straight and loop loops and defy tigers—not to mention white Persians—"

"You're making fun of me," she interrupted, "and I've been honest with you."

He saw the warm color in her cheeks and the tears which she held back, and he laughed.

"You see, dear, I'm not a gentleman."

"No, *you* are not," she admitted gravely.

"But the other fellow? Well, we

won't talk about him. He hasn't much of a chance. It's Money-bags you'll marry in the end."

He saw her gesture, and his voice grew suddenly rough and unsteady.

"Dear, I do love you. It's a queer thing. I've never been able to care for any one before. But I love you. I want you. I've even got a queer superstition about you. It's as if some one said, 'If you don't win her, you'll lose yourself—you'll be damned.' So I've got to win you. But I love you. I'd like to love you more. I'd like to worship you—believe in you, but I can't—I can't imagine it. Something inside me grins all the time."

"And that's why I'm not going to be your wife."

He caught hold of her hands and kissed them roughly.

"Oh, yes—in the end."

She freed herself with a quiet strength, and he stood back from her, breathing heavily, his eyes alight with an unholy excitement. Steps sounded outside in the corridor, and a footman made a discreet appearance.

"If you please, sir, this letter has just come. The messenger said it was urgent."

"Excuse me."

She was not looking at him. For many minutes, she kept her gaze resolutely averted, until his absolute silence began to trouble her. She turned to him at last and found his eyes fixed on her with a curious, whimsical intensity. But the savage excitement had gone wholly. He was rather pale, momentarily older, and the hand that held the typewritten letter was steady.

"Is it bad news?" she asked involuntarily.

"No. On the contrary, the very best. Almost a miracle." He made her a little bow. "But you were quite right and very far-seeing. A case of feminine instinct. You will never be my wife. Please forget everything—all

my foolishness and your own, too. I've already forgotten."

"Thank you," she said, almost inaudibly.

He offered her his arm.

"And now that we've admired my ancestors, shall we return?"

A very excited gentleman put his head into the Faircloughs' car just as the driver was preparing to worm his way out of the tangle of traffic.

"I believe it's true," he said in a loud whisper. "There's even a hint of it in the papers—veiled, of course. It seems it's been going on for years—regular undermining. Either he knew or he must have simply closed his eyes. Not involved, I hope?"

"I hope not," said Mr. Fairclough earnestly.

"Good. There'll be more about this to-morrow." The gentleman skipped off the step and the car forged ahead.

Mr. Fairclough turned at once to the quiet, inattentive figure in the far corner. Like the true John Bull he was, he wasted no time on subtleties.

"My dear—*did* he propose?"

She nodded.

"And you refused him?"

"Yes."

She lifted her head a little, as if preparing to meet attack. Mr. Fairclough took off his hat and mopped his brow.

"Thank God!" he said piously.

It was unexpected. She turned a startled, troubled face toward him for the first time.

"I don't understand. I thought——"

"Why, the silly young fool has lost all his money," said Mr. Fairclough.

CHAPTER IV.

He wondered vaguely whether human beings were chameleons, unconsciously taking on the color of their surroundings. He had fitted in so per-

fectly with the beautiful, fabulously expensive Jacobean dining room, and now he seemed to fit in equally well with the packing cases. He sat on one of the latter and kicked his heels against it and watched the workmen, who were removing the precious *objets d'art* with a callous brutality that would have enraged him in the days when these things had been his own. Now they belonged to some one else, and he didn't care. He began to see that Elizabeth had been right about them. They had never really belonged to him. If they had, he would have wept to see them go. He would have torn his hair out at the sight of a marble Venus being bundled headlong into a plebeian panteh-nicon.

As it was, he was entirely absorbed in his own feelings. He was surprised to find himself so different. He hardly knew himself. He felt that his personality had become incalculable. He didn't know any more what he would do under certain circumstances. He didn't know whether he could ride or play polo or run a car or a flying machine. The man who had done these things was somebody he had known a long time ago and had almost forgotten. He felt as if he had been stripped naked, without so much as an assured character to start with.

He was considering all this when Mr. Wishard elbowed his way through the crowd of removers and furniture and made an unexpected appearance from behind a displaced sideboard. Mr. Wishard, whose normal taste ran to chorus girls, cocktails, and spats, had subdued his appearance to the occasion. He wore a black tie and a deeply moved expression, and his pressure of Wyatt's languidly extended hand spoke all the unutterable things which strong, silent Englishmen carry within their broad chests in similar moments of crisis.

"Too bad! Too bad! Absolutely rotten! 'Pon my word, I could sit

down and howl like a kid! Positively. Perfectly sickening!"

"I thought you'd be feeling pretty bad," Wyatt observed.

"I do." Mr. Wishard sat down on a neighboring packing case and rubbed his eyeglass free from suspicious moisture. "All the way from Piccadilly I've been kicking myself, figuratively, of course. If I hadn't been such a damn' fool with my money! My dear boy, I can't tell you how I felt about it. There have I been squandering your munificent allowance, collecting nothing but debts, and now that your rainy day has come, I haven't so much as an umbrella to offer you. I simply couldn't stick it. It made me too sick with myself. So I just taxied straight to old Lewisohn and popped my tie pin—you know, the emerald cabochon—and here we are!"

He thrust a pocketbook into Wyatt's hand and looked enormously embarrassed.

"Of course it's a mere fleabite—Lewisohn's an old Jew—but it's better than nothing, and I damn' well had to do something or burst."

Wyatt looked at the pocketbook and then at Wishard. He blinked like a man who has been thrust out of a cell into strong sunlight. His sense of insecurity increased to the point of physical nausea. He didn't know himself and he didn't know Wishard. Ten days ago, Wishard had been a cadger—the worst of a tribe of cadgers—and yet there he sat with his pathetically orphaned black tie, looking like a schoolboy who has just been caught doing a good deed.

"It's amazingly decent of you," Wyatt began feebly. "I really hadn't thought—hadn't expected—I mean, I supposed you'd be worried about the allowance—"

"I am," Mr. Wishard interrupted frankly. "I don't know what the deuce I'm to do. Absolutely good-for-noth-

ing. And that's not the worst. I'll float somehow. I'm that sort of chap. But you! And here I've been eating out of your hand all these years—Well, I can't tell you what I feel."

He evidently couldn't. He sat there with his eyeglass windowing a dejected, slightly protuberant blue eye, his plump hands clasped in front of him, his heels pounding distractedly against the packing case. Evidently emotion choked him. Wyatt weighed the well-stuffed pocketbook and examined it as if he expected it to explode. He felt extraordinarily fatuous. He wished he could speak without stammering and that something of his old cynical fluency had been left over from the wreckage. His whole world stood on its head.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "there's nothing for you to worry about. Of course I ought to have told you about it before, but I've been busy and rather worried. I'm not utterly smashed. When all these things have been sold, there'll be enough to keep my—eh—pensions going—yours included."

Mr. Wishard stopped drumming with his heels.

"Eh?"

"I mean—your allowance will go on as usual."

"I shan't take it," said Mr. Wishard promptly and firmly.

"Oh, yes, you will."

"I won't!" Mr. Wishard declared, inflating his chest and looking truculent.

"If you don't, I'll give it to a cats' home."

Mr. Wishard paused to consider.

"Well, you are a devil of a fellow! Always after your own way. And I hate cats. I tell you what—we'll share it."

"No. It's awfully kind of you, but I don't want any money from any one. I've got a craze for making a fresh

start. I'm going to see what I'm worth in the world's market. You take your allowance or it goes to some one else. That's the whole business."

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Wishard was evidently battling for self-expression.

"Well—then, I won't," he said at last.

"I won't."

"You won't what?"

"I won't touch your money. Or, yes—I will. I'll take it. I won't have it go to a cats' home. But I'll keep it for you. Man, do you think I could look any one in the face again if I did a dirty trick like that? Do you think I have no sense of honor, of decency, of gratitude, of common humanity—"

"I don't know what to think," Wyatt broke in helplessly. "I never expected you to take it like this. It's confoundedly upsetting—worse than losing a fortune. I wish you'd behave normally."

Mr. Wishard gave a fat, jolly laugh.

"I know. You expected us all to pass by on the other side, eh? Give you the go-by because you weren't a millionaire any more. Ah, but you wronged us, Wyatt. You'll see how your real friends will rally around you. You'll know whom to trust in the future. This is the test of men, dear boy."

"You're an awfully decent fellow," Wyatt admitted, reluctantly, but sincerely.

"You've been awfully decent to me," Mr. Wishard declared in a choked voice.

This emotional situation was brought to a merciful end by the arrival of a third person. There was no butler to intervene, and the removers had no interest in the matter, so that any one could have walked in who wanted to. The newcomer got himself badly involved between the sideboard and a packing case and finally contented himself with gazing over the top of the

latter obstacle like a worried gnome peering over the edge of his earth home. His appearance was so pathetically comic that Wyatt said, "Hullo, and who the devil are you?" quite cheerfully.

"I see you don't remember me, Mr. Wyatt," the old man began. "My name's McCormick, designer to the Ferersley Company, Engineers. I came to see you a few weeks ago about an *aéroplane*—"

"I've had so many *aéroplanes*," Wyatt interrupted.

"And you offered me three guineas—which—which I tore up."

Wyatt shook his head.

"Lots of them do that." He caught Mr. Wishard's eye and suffered a real pang of remorse. "I mean the genuine ones do. I wish I'd been more sympathetic, Mr. McCormick. I might just as well have financed you as not. As it is, I can't help any one any more. I'm high and dry. You'll have to go elsewhere."

"I haven't come for money," said Mr. McCormick sadly. "I came to ask if it were really true that you—you had lost everything. I couldn't believe it. Rich men talk of ruin when they've got two thousand a year left. If that is the case with you, I have only to apologize and withdraw."

"I don't understand," said Wyatt, rubbing a worried forehead. "You're talking double Dutch. You're saying things the wrong way round. It's upsetting me. What does any one want with a man who has absolutely not a stiver? It's unnatural. For pity's sake, talk naturally, Mr. McCormick!"

The designer for Ferersley & Co. took off his broad-brimmed hat, placed it carefully on a packing case, and stared down into the crown with an air of anxious embarrassment.

"Then—then perhaps you'll have to earn your living, Mr. Wyatt."

"It seems inevitable," Wyatt agreed wryly.

"But your friends—"

"I'm not going to accept anything from friends. I'm going to make my own way or I'm going under. I'm sick of—of all this sort of thing—"

"I suppose you wouldn't take three pounds a week, sir?"

"Are you, by any chance, offering me a job, Mr. McCormick?"

"Yes, Mr. Wyatt, I am."

The two men stared at each other, and the eyes of the old designer were lit with a sudden enthusiasm. He held himself very straight. He had lost all traces of embarrassment. From sheer awkwardness, Wyatt laughed.

"This beats everything!" he admitted.

"You see," said Mr. McCormick earnestly, "I meant it when I told you I needed a man of courage. I believe you are that man. It's not only your sporting feats I'm thinking of now—it's the way you're facing this trouble. It takes grit to start life all over again. I want grit. I'm getting old, Mr. Wyatt. There are times when my nerve fails me. And if ever I achieve my object—if ever my machine comes into being—I shall want a man I can trust—a brave man who will fly her for me. I want you. You're an airman and inevitably a mechanic. As for me, I'm not rich. I have very little to offer, but I *do* offer a sporting chance to a sportsman."

For the first time in his man's life, Wyatt blushed to the ears. He felt ridiculously young and happy.

"Do you know, I've never been so flattered—so bucked in all my life?" he declared. "Nobody's ever said anything so jolly to me before. And I—I've got to believe you mean it. That's what's so jolly. But supposing your machine doesn't come into being? Supposing I don't believe in it?"

Mr. McCormick looked at him wistfully.

"You'll have to believe in it. At the works, every one thinks I'm a clever madman, and they won't listen properly. They're old and tired and stuck in their rut. But you're young. You've got youth's vision and quixotism. You won't be afraid—to dare."

"But you say you're poor, and I haven't a penny. Where's our millionaire coming from? Supposing everybody turns us down with three-guinea checks."

"Something will happen," Mr. McCormick declared. His face flushed with a sudden wave of fanatic faith. "We'll work together—and then something will come along, I don't know what. You'll bring luck—that's what I feel. You'll bring me my chance."

"Well!" The young man looked about him as if appealing for witnesses. "Well, I never thought anybody would feel like that about me!"

"You'll consider my offer?"

"No, I won't. I'll take it. And, Mr. McCormick, I'm ashamed of that beastly check—I am really. You're a good fellow. I do believe in you. I can't help it. It was all that money. Fairly poisoned one. And I'll put my back into it. You wait."

They shook hands. Mr. Wishard, who had hitherto been a silent audience, waved a blessing over them.

"You see, you cast your bread on the waters, dear boy, and now it's coming back to you."

"In regular quatern loaves," Wyatt declared gayly. "By Jove, I never thought any one could feel so jolly over losing a fortune! It's amazing."

"It ought to be a lesson to you," said Mr. Wishard very solemnly. He adjusted his top hat to the departing angle, offered to accompany Mr. McCormick to his bus, and squeezed his cousin's hand with sympathetic warmth. "Now you know your true friends, dear boy. May you never forget them!"

Wyatt accompanied them to the front door and then returned to his packing case to review the situation.

It was now midday. The workmen were taking an extended hour off, and a blissful peace brooded over the dismantled house—at least in the first flush it appeared blissful, but after ten minutes it became melancholy. After all, it was very nice to find that a cadger had a human heart beating under a wide waistcoat, and that entirely uninterested people considered you a fine fellow and incidentally a sort of lucky pig, but it wasn't everything. Not even in gratitude could he really love them. Even if Wishard chucked himself into the river as a proof of friendship, it would be still quite impossible to love him or to care two pins whether he was fished out or not.

Fundamentally, the only people whose opinion mattered were the people one loved, and he had never loved any one but Elizabeth, and of course that was all over. By this time, she and her father would be thanking their stars for their escape, and perhaps she would be just a little grateful that he had spared her the obvious reminder.

Well, it was no use feeling bitter. As long as women were brought up for nothing but marriage, one couldn't expect sincerity from them. Marriage was just another mean way of earning a living, and one had to be businesslike and tricky and dishonest like other business people. But Elizabeth was so beautiful. She looked so fine a personality. It made it all the worse.

Just at that moment some one knocked at the front door. It was a curious knock—at once timid and determined, the knock of a heroic soul in a state of mortal terror. It arrested Wyatt's attention. He began to speculate as to the character of the unknown. Finally he went and opened the door.

There was a taxi outside with a good

deal of luggage, and a lady on the doorstep.

"Brian, would you mind paying? It's half a crown—and I haven't any change."

Now a good sportsman has one outstanding quality—he is trained to meet the unexpected without a flicker of the eyelids. Wyatt paid the taxi man and helped further to congest the hall with the luggage—all this with an air of extreme matter-of-factness. Then he closed the door.

"Elizabeth!" he said.

She put a white, firm hand on his shoulder and looked at him with an odd, unsteady little smile.

"My dear, I haven't done this on impulse. I've done it after mature consideration, and if I've done wrong—if I've made a mistake—you must say so honestly, for both our sakes. The happiness of both our lives depends on it. And it's so easy to get another taxi."

"I won't call one till I know what you *have* done." He slipped his arm through hers and guided her cautiously toward the most convenient packing case. "We're in the devil of a mess here. If you'll sit on my coat, you won't dirty your frock. And then we can have a talk."

She made no protest. He knew by the way she accepted him in his shirt sleeves that, for all her steadiness, she was in a state of tumult. He sat down beside her and looked calm and brotherly and sympathetic. He was disgusted to see that his hands shook, and he thrust them into his pockets.

"Well, here we are!" he remarked with horrible fatuity. "Tell me how you got here?"

"I came in a taxi," she replied, "and I've come to ask you if you've still got that license."

"Yes. I was going to tear it up, but——"

"Could you marry—any one—this afternoon?"

"I believe so, but I don't want to—not any one."

"Would you marry—me?"

For a moment he did not—could not—answer. He knew he was behaving absurdly—like a boy, without self-control, without sense—but he could only stare at her through a mist and fight to keep himself from trembling openly.

"No," he jerked out finally, "I wouldn't. I haven't a penny. I wouldn't do a thing like that."

"Then it wasn't true?"

"What wasn't?"

"That you loved me—needed me? You said that you felt something big—your life—depended on—marrying me. It was just—your way of making fun?"

He bounded to his feet.

"It wasn't! I meant it! It's—it's true! But I'm not out for pity——"

"I've not brought you pity. I love you. I said as much that night. But there was an obstacle. It's gone now. We're equals. You have nothing to give me but yourself and your love. You've got to believe *now* that that was all I ever wanted."

He came a step nearer. He looked so altered, so young, so shaken, so pitifully faltering, that she held out her hands in a gesture of almost maternal love. He took them and pressed them so that she could have cried out with pain.

"Elizabeth—my dearest—think what you're doing!"

"I have thought. If I'd come immediately, you might suspect an impulse. That's why I waited."

"Think! I've got a job—three pounds a week!"

Incredulous as he was, he could not blind himself to the flash of joyful pride in her misty eyes.

"We could live on three pounds—at first. It wouldn't be for long. You're

going to do something great—you and I."

"I'm not going to take help or money from any one."

"I don't bring you either. I'm only bringing the help I have in me. I've run away. I know my father will never forgive what I am going to do."

He sat down beside her again. For a moment he wrestled with himself. And then suddenly he put his arms around her and his head on her shoulder.

"You know—I've had a beastly time of it—wanting you. I—I believe I'm going to be hysterical—howl like a kid—and then you won't marry me."

"My darling!"

"I didn't know it—I've never been happy before. It's unnerving. You're sure?"

"I love you."

"In two poky rooms?"

"Even on a packing case."

A door banged. Raucous voices sounded in the hall. Mr. Wyatt sat up and wiped his eyes.

"It's those damned workmen. Anyhow, you're horribly compromised. You'll *have* to marry me, so let's go out and do it now."

CHAPTER V.

* For a man who was altruistically preparing to sacrifice his income to a cats' home, Mr. Wishard spent a peculiar afternoon. In the first place, he lunched at the Ritz—very expensively—and had sundry cocktails, over which he chuckled in a way suggestive of the fact that they were not his first that day or likely to be his last. Then he drew up a list of names and addresses in his notebook, chartered a taxi, and set off on a series of prolonged afternoon calls, from which he emerged with an increasing air of prosperity.

Finally he ushered himself into the

office of Messrs. Fairclough & Co. and demanded audience.

Mr. Fairclough was in a bad temper. His bluff, hail-fellow-well-met, could-not-do-a-shady-thing-if-I-tried John-Bullishness had slightly evaporated. One felt that at a pinch he might be induced to contemplate a little stock juggling without undue injury to his sensibilities. In addition, he was smoking a large cigar of the kind patronized by all stage villains, and the whole effect was distinctly human and encouraging.

Mr. Wishard helped himself to a cigar out of a box evidently reserved for callers of no importance and sat down.

"How's the world? Still revolving, eh, what?" he asked humorously.

Mr. Fairclough intimated that he neither knew nor cared.

"Everything's rotten," he stated. "I don't know what we're coming to. There's an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in this country which is undermining the empire. Nobody believes in anybody. Nobody believes even in me. It's incredible. What have I done?"

"Well, you've gone bust once or twice, dear boy, haven't you?" Mr. Wishard suggested.

"You mean I've been twice in the bankruptcy court? Good heavens, sir, that isn't going bust, not by several thousands! A fellow that has gone through the receiver's hands and can still keep two cars running ought to be the hero of his country. The financiers ought to raise a statue to him. The people ought to flock to his standard. What better proof could you have of business genius, of financial ingenuity?"

"It's so unfortunate that the stock-buying public hasn't got a more artistic eye for that sort of thing," Mr. Wishard lamented. "It's these damn' middle-class standards."

"And I've got to get that company

floated somehow," Mr. Fairclough broke in rudely. "I'm involved up to the eyes. But I must have backing—influential backing—some one people know about and can put their money on with an easy mind. And I can't find my man anywhere."

"Rotten luck!" Mr. Wishard declared with the contented sympathy of a Christian contemplating some one else's troubles.

"Rotten luck! I should say so! If only that fool Wyatt hadn't played the giddy goat with his money! Still, of course, I might not have got him anyhow. A regular tough customer, close and suspicious as a Jew. I can't think how a cautious beggar like that could have made such a mess of things."

Mr. Wishard sat up.

"How much would you give for a real, bona-fide, confiding millionaire?" he asked unexpectedly.

"Anything," said Mr. Fairclough.

"If I promised you one, would you give me a check for a thousand pounds?"

"Yes, I would."

"Well, then, you can draw out your check right now," said Mr. Wishard Napoleonically.

Mr. Fairclough sat down at his desk, leaning forward so that he could fix his visitor at close range.

"I've never bought a pig in a poke yet," he said, "and I don't propose to begin now."

"And I'm not going to sell inside information except for spot cash. You draw up that check. It's worth it. You can take my solemn word on it."

Mr. Fairclough looked as if he would rather not, and Mr. Wishard drew from his inner pocket a neat little bundle of checks and spread them out on the table.

"You study these signatures," he said. "They were given me this afternoon on the same conditions as I've offered you, and not one buyer has re-

pented. If you don't believe me, you can ring up and ask 'em yourself."

Mr. Fairclough looked at the checks for several minutes. Then, without a word, he produced a check and filled it in carefully. Mr. Wishard accepted it with a bow.

"If you were broke, with a few thousands saved from the ruins, would you give them to a cousin you disliked?" he asked.

"No, I wouldn't," said Mr. Fairclough promptly.

"Do you think any one would?"

"No, I don't."

"Nor do I."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it."

"Wyatt's keeping on my allowance."

"Well?"

"The fact is," said Mr. Wishard slowly, "Wyatt isn't broke at all."

"Eh?"

"I mean it. It's a got-up business. I smelled a rat at once, but when he told me about that allowance, I *knew*. About three weeks ago, Wyatt was grousing to me—said he could trust no one because of his money—and I said, 'My dear boy, if you haven't the heart to cast the incubus from you, pretend to.' It was just an idea of mine—spur-of-the-moment sort of thing. But though he said nothing, I saw he'd caught on at once. Of course I pretended *not* to see, and equally of course I'm taking the whole thing deadly seriously. You should just watch me play up to him. My dear chap"—Mr. Wishard quavered with a sudden rush of enthusiasm—"it's going to be a perfect little gold mine for those who are in the know!"

"I don't see——" began Mr. Fairclough.

"Of course not. You wouldn't. You haven't studied psychology. I have. Old Lewisohn put me up to it. It's a great thing. Every man in business ought to study it. Old Lewisohn said,

"Prove to Wyatt that he can trust you and then diddle him," or words to that effect. Well, that's what we're going to do—you and I and these other chaps."

"You mean——"

Mr. Wishard tapped the table with his knuckles.

"I mean we've got to rally round him, stick up for him, play the friend-in-need stunt. Then, when he breaks it to us that it's a spoof, we can come down on him for any moral thing we fancy. He'll be too softened to say no to anything. He'll melt at the sight of us. We shall be his tried-in-the-furnace-and-not-found-wanting pals for the rest of our naturals. And the others won't have a look in—not a squint."

"How many are in this?"

"Ten."

"You've made eleven thousand this afternoon?"

"I'm out to make a lot more," said Mr. Wishard genially. "Dear old Wyatt may not like me, but after this he'll have to acknowledge I'm true blue. I shall be his chief sample of innate nobility."

"Oh, shut up!" Mr. Fairclough bounded to his feet in a burst of fury. "Confound it! Why didn't I know this before? I'm compromised already. I've avoided the fellow like the plague. I was terrified he'd come down on me for a loan or a job—or Elizabeth. Elizabeth's no end of a worry—infernally romantic. She might have gone off with him. I've said every beastly thing I could about him to keep her quiet. And now what am I to do? How the devil am I to prove to the fellow that I have always loved him like a brother—like a son?"

The door opened, and an office boy inserted a scrubby head.

"A Mrs. Wyatt to see you, sir."

"A Mrs——"

There was no opportunity for exclamation. The office boy vanished.

The door opened wider, and a veiled lady crossed the threshold. She carried herself with an irresistible authority, and when the door closed, she lifted her veil. Only by the utmost exertion of his self-control was Mr. Wishard able to suppress a shout of hysterical enjoyment. Mr. Fairclough staggered.

"Elizabeth!"

"I thought I'd break it to you at once," she said in a low voice. "I was married to Brian this afternoon."

She looked at the two men. Her father's face was diabolically contorted. Mr. Wishard, like a battleship in distress, enveloped himself in smoke.

"I know how you feel about it," she went on more clearly. "I know you'll never forgive either of us. Money has always meant everything to you. It has always seemed to me to be a curse. And Brian and I love each other. We're content to fight our own way. We're not going to ask help of any one. You needn't be afraid of that. But I came here to tell you at once. It seemed braver."

She faltered. Mr. Wishard peered through his barrage at Mr. Fairclough. Mr. Fairclough looked beatific—a John Bull flooded in the light of deep feeling. He took a step toward her, holding out his big hands in a big gesture.

"Betty—my own girl!"

"Father!"

"I never thought—I didn't dare hope—I've been waiting all these days—leaving you free, uninfluenced. I thought, 'If she really loves him, she'll go to him in his hour of trouble.' He was the man I had chosen for you—a good man in whose hands I could trust the one being left me in my life."

"Father, I thought——"

He embraced her tenderly, a little smile of whimsical sadness playing on his broad features.

"You thought I hadn't a soul above a banking account, eh? My dear, we poor mortals mask ourselves as best

we can. Behind the mask, we're all much the same. Even the hardest money-grabber has a heart."

He disengaged himself gently from her bewildered clasp.

"My dear, where is he?"

She flushed gloriously.

"He's here—outside, in the office—waiting for me."

"Ready to spring out and rescue you from the claws of the ogre?" Mr. Fairclough gave a jolly laugh and flung the door wide. "Brian—my dear boy!"

Mr. Wishard reached for his hat. He felt keenly that his retirement from this family scene was only decent. Unnoticed he tiptoed to the private exit and passed out, giving Mr. Fairclough, as he did so, a glance of profoundest admiration.

CHAPTER VI.

It was an absurdly small room and an absurdly small table. They had brought down all the chairs from all the bedrooms—there were two—and had even disguised a soap box to look like a cretonne-covered stool of original design. Even then there were not enough. Standing close together, with arms linked, surveying the scene of their labors, they decided that they had reached the limit of possibility.

Elizabeth rubbed her cheek against her husband's coat.

"You'll have to balance yourself on the fender, darling," she decided, "and Mr. McCormick can sit on the back of the ottoman. I'm sure he won't mind, and he'll look quite charming—like a sprite. As for me, I shall sit outside with my ear to the keyhole and listen to the counsels of the lords of the earth and tremble exceedingly."

He kissed her ear.

"You're going to balance with me on the fender. We're partners, and I'm not going to let you shirk your

share of the responsibilities—or dangers. I need you always. You give me courage to do things. The first time I took you up with me in the new machine, I thought I'd be sick with funk, but I wasn't. I felt I wanted to dare things I'd never dared before. I felt you wanted me to."

She smiled gravely at his boyishness.

"I want you to 'dare everything that becomes a man,'" she said. "And my pride in you makes me brave, too. I wasn't afraid even when you looped. I thought, 'Well, if he does make a mess of it, we shall go together, so what does it matter?'"

"Thanks. I like your wifely trust in my abilities. I say, though, seriously, it's awfully jolly, loving people, isn't it? Makes a world of difference. Think of my living thirty years not caring two pins for any one! I must have been a wretched bloke—no end of a beast, too. It makes me shudder to think how I used to wipe my boots on people. Cynical young cub! I can't think how you managed to love me."

"I didn't love *that* you," she explained. "But I knew that I could love the thirty-shillings-a-week you, if ever he turned up—in fact, that I should fall in love at first sight and throw myself at his head, which I did."

"You blessed woman!"

They were happily silent for a minute. Then a doorbell rang, and Elizabeth hastily disengaged herself.

"Do smooth your hair, Brian. Look composed. Look haughty. I've never seen you nervous before, and it quite alarms me."

"I *am* nervous—horribly nervous. I used to think these old fellows the biggest blood-suckers on earth, and look at the way they're behaving! Coals of fire isn't the word for it. My dear, *you'd* be nervous if you could hear your hair sizzling under them."

"It *is* sizzling," she assured him

rather breathlessly. "Think of father! Think of the things I used to think about him, and look at the way he's behaved!"

"The biggest gem of the lot, by Jove!"

A very small person, hired for the occasion, with a white cap poised excitedly over one ear, opened the door, murmured something unintelligible, and vanished. The bumpings and shufflings in the hall came nearer. The room began to fill with large, opulent people.

Everybody shook hands—solemnly—with an air of decently subdued congratulation such as is usual at the funeral of a wealthy, but unpopular relative. As they arrived, the guests were arranged neatly round the table, after the manner of sardines. Mr. McCormick came last of all, but it was not necessary to invite him on to the back of the ottoman, as he retired at once to an unoccupied corner, whence he watched the proceedings with a pathetic, childish excitement. Wyatt took one end of the table, his father-in-law the other. Mrs. Wyatt, rescued from the fender by the chivalrous Mr. Wishard, was supported between two stout city magnates on as much of their respective chairs as they could safely spare. Everybody now having been arranged in order, there was a silence, heavy with expectancy.

Wyatt got up. He looked very young and so exceedingly embarrassed and unlike his old self that Mr. Wishard felt quite touched. He therefore rapped the table; whereupon everybody rapped the table as a mark of sympathy, and Wyatt bowed and blushed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I mean—my wife and gentlemen"—a ripple of good-humored laughter—"I understand that I am chairman of this meeting and that it is my business to say something. I've never been a chairman before, and I'm afraid I don't

know the formalities at all, so I'm going to say just what I have to say without making a lot of words about it."

Applause. "Delightful innovation!" from stout member of the audience.

"First of all, I want to say straight out what I think about you all. I feel I owe you an apology, and I shan't have any peace until I've made it. In the old days, I never thought I had any friends—not real friends. I had an idea that everybody was to be had for money, and that everybody who came to me came asking and hoping to be bought. I thought that without money I shouldn't have a soul in the world who would care a halfpenny what became of me or who would move a hand to help me. I was wrong. I—I insulted people—all of you—by thinking as I did. You've proved to me that I was just an ignorant, wrong-headed young puppy." "No, no!" and a jolly "Yes, yes!" from Mr. Fairclough. "You've all been simply splendid. You've all been ready to help, and when you saw the only kind of help I wanted, you gave it to me without stint. I can't thank you. I only hope I shall be able to prove how deeply I feel—about—about—everything."

The rather lame conclusion was covered by more table rapping and Mr. Wishard, who 'blew his nose loudly. The one-time millionaire straightened his repentant shoulders.

"Now I'm going to talk to you about the *aéroplane*. It's Mr. McCormick's job really, but he won't, so I've got to. Thanks to you and to your confidence in my judgment, our machine will soon be completed, and I shall prove to you that your trust was justified. Perhaps in a month's time, an Englishman, on an English machine, with an English engine, will have made the first Atlantic flight."

Loud applause silenced the orator for

a moment, and broke the flight of his eloquence. He added shyly that he really hadn't anything else to say, but that his audience would find an account sheet in front of them, giving details of expenditure up to date and the amount required to bring the enterprise to completion. Amidst somewhat less enthusiasm, he sat down, and Mr. Fairclough rose to respond.

Mr. Fairclough was in a waggish mood. He said that having had to give "our young friend" his greatest possession, money was of really no account at all. He had given proof of his confidence in Mr. Wyatt by accepting him gladly as a son-in-law. He had always had the greatest respect for Mr. Wyatt—even in the days when he had money (laughter) and he respected him still more now after his manly and delightfully ingenuous speech. Mr. Fairclough concluded by saying that he voted for the further financing of the Magnus Aéroplane Company, and he hoped that the rest of the board would vote with him.

Mr. Wishard seconded the motion. He began with proper formality, but toward the end, his cousinly feelings overcame him, and he addressed Wyatt as "dear old chap;" whereupon there was a general tendency to shake hands all round. Just after the motion had been carried, the small hired person arrived with a very large tray, and with Australian Burgundy and biscuits, the last trace of ceremony vanished. Mr. Wishard toasted the future conqueror of the Atlantic, and Mr. Fairclough made jokes about the Burgundy, and the little room filled with a delightful, if somewhat stuffy, atmosphere of good-fellowship. Nobody took any notice of Mr. McCormick, which was quite natural, as he was reputed a genius and therefore something in the nature of a freak.

Finally the board of the Magnus Aéroplane Company took its departure,

Mr. McCormick lingering for a last shake of the hand. He was trembling all over, and his old eyes shone like an excited boy's.

"It's come true," he whispered. "I used to dream of this—of some fine young man who would bring it all to perfection—and when I saw you—I knew that you were the man. I knew you'd bring me luck."

"And you've brought me luck, too," said Wyatt, laughing. "What about the three quid a week?"

And then they were alone again. Elizabeth stood on the hearth, her eyes bent thoughtfully on the little smoky fire. Her husband looked at her with a shy uneasiness.

"Did I make an awful fool of myself, dear? I'm afraid I did. When I stood before those splendid people—whom I'd been calling names all my life—I lost my nerve. But I felt I had to say something. I'd misjudged them. I had to say so. But, still, I did look an ass, I know."

"You were splendid," she answered unevenly. "I loved you for it. It's not that. It's my nerve, too, Brian. Just for a moment it failed. I was afraid——"

"You!"

"I was thinking—when the time comes—it will be you who will have to make the test—who will risk your life——"

The moment's awkward diffidence fell from him. He came to her and held her close in his arms.

"I shan't fail!" he whispered. "Not with you behind me!"

It was raining. Two members of the board, besides Mr. Fairclough and Mr. Wishard, stood under their umbrellas and gazed gloomily about them. The suburban street was innocent of traffic. It had, indeed, a look that declared plainly that the very thought of a taxi was alien to its refined and ex-

clusive nature. Mr. Wishard groaned aloud.

"How on earth are we ever going to get back to civilization?" he demanded tragically.

"And how long is this silly business going to last?" asked Mr. Fairclough.

"He's keeping it up an infernal time," one member of the board observed, extricating himself from a puddle, "and it's an infernally expensive business."

"I gave an engineer friend of mine a rough idea of that *aéroplane*," the second member stated in a falsetto voice, "and he said the thing could never get off the ground."

"Nobody ever supposed it would," Mr. Wishard retorted contemptuously. "That's not the idea, at all."

Mr. Fairclough snorted.

"Well, if something doesn't happen soon, I shall take a hand," he threatened. "A joke's a joke, but this joke isn't a joke, and I'm sick of it."

"If you spoil my game——" Mr. Wishard began.

"I'm getting wet feet," said the first member bitterly. "I shall catch an infernal cold. What makes people want to live in infernal holes like this?"

"If you'd only take your umbrella drippings off my neck——"

"Well, it's no use standing here, anyhow."

This was unanswerable. With a last glance of disgust at the red-brick villa, the quartet set off, muttering acrimoniously, and vanished into the dripping darkness.

CHAPTER VII.

Elizabeth ran her hand affectionately over the propeller's silken surface.

"I believe I know every nut and bolt in the machine as well as you do, Mr. McCormick," she said. "I feel as if I could drive her myself, when the time comes. One of these days, when you send your maid out to whistle for

an *aéroplane*, I shall have one like this of my very own and run her over to New York for the day."

"My dear Elizabeth!" said Mr. Fairclough reprovingly. He gave the huge, unfinished machine a disrespectful poke with his walking stick. "It's no use being foolishly optimistic. The thing has got to fly first. Somebody told me it never would or could."

Mr. McCormick's sunken old eyes flashed round on the disparager.

"That somebody was a liar, anyhow," he jerked out, "and a jealous one! There are enough people who'd give their eyes to know our secret. And when Mr. Wyatt and I land in New York——"

Mr. Fairclough laughed bluffly.

"What enthusiasm! Delightful in a man of your age, my dear sir. Well, we must hope for the best. I'm sure we've proved our good will, haven't we?"

"I never heard of Mr. Fairclough putting money on a horse that he knew wasn't going to win," retorted the incensed old inventor, rubbing a cloth over the poked portion of his invention. "Never."

"I think we'd better be going, Elizabeth," said Mr. Fairclough, less bluffly.

Elizabeth gave the *aéroplane* a last glance, pressed Mr. McCormick's horny hand, and followed her father out of the hangar. There was an unusual flush in her cheeks and a warning tremor that was not of tears about her mouth.

"You're not very nice to Mr. McCormick, father," she said bluntly.

"Old fraud!" said Mr. Fairclough. He recovered himself at once and drew her arm affectionately through his. "My dear, forgive me. I'm a little out of temper. Business has been going badly lately, and I'm hard hit. Financially, that—that thing doesn't make things easier, and there are moments when I feel——"

"What do you feel?"

"Oh, never mind," said Mr. Fairclough, in the tone of one who is determined on ventilating his grievance at all costs. "I don't want to worry you."

"It'll worry me a lot more if you don't tell me," she said firmly.

"You're a dear child," Mr. Fairclough admitted. "I'd sacrifice anything to see you happy."

"I am happy," Elizabeth returned with cold reason, "and I don't really see why you should talk about sacrifice. All business men have to venture something if they want a return. If you've financed Brian and Mr. McCormick, it's because you expect to get something out of it."

Mr. Fairclough felt a momentary, but profound pang of regret for those good old times when male parents were infallible and irreproachable by divine right.

"My dear, you evidently don't think very highly of human nature," he said coldly. "As a matter of fact, my expectations with regard to the bag of tricks that we've just inspected are very low indeed. I don't believe it will ever get off the ground. If it does, it'll come down faster than its pilot will like. I hope to goodness Brian will find some one else to make the experiment."

She stood still, forcing him to look at her.

"You mean—you don't believe in it?"

"No, my dear—frankly—I don't."

"And yet you and all those others have financed it—given your money, your time—"

"Elizabeth," said Mr. Fairclough, gently, but firmly, "you misjudge people. You don't believe in altruism. A great mistake. Always believe in people, and they'll believe in you. With regard to Brian, we hadn't any choice. There he was—our friend—your husband. He would accept neither money

nor help. We had only one thing to do—humor him, pretend to treat it as a sound business investment. Well, we did it. What wouldn't we have done to prove our friendship? What wouldn't I have done, Elizabeth"—Mr. Fairclough's voice shook perceptibly—"to safeguard your happiness? My dear, you don't know—"

She interrupted him passionately.

"And when he finds out—supposing it's true, what you say—I won't, I can't believe it—but supposing it should fail—then what have you done? You'll have helped to ruin him more surely, more completely. You'll have put him under a weight of shame and obligation that he'll never be able to shake off! What future will there be for us?"

She walked on again, and her face was turned from him. But there was a despair about her that Mr. Fairclough, in the light of his superior knowledge, found quite charming.

"My dear—" he began.

"It would have been kinder to have left us to fight our own way through!" she exclaimed, not heeding him.

Mr. Fairclough smiled. This was undoubtedly the psychological moment, as Mr. Wishard would say—and high time into the bargain. Something had to be done, and it was as well done now as later.

"But supposing," he said, gazing speculatively at his boots, "but supposing it wasn't a real fight, but just a sham battle, a false alarm, the sort of thing one springs on people to see what they're made of. Supposing—"

"Please, please be serious, father!"

"But I am serious—very serious. My dear, if you promise not to be upset, I'll tell you a secret—a delightful little secret. But it must *be* a secret. You must promise me. It would spoil everything if Brian knew we knew."

Her answer shook with hope and fear and impatience.

"I promise, I promise."

"Thank you. I know I can trust you. Of course I hadn't meant to say anything—we all meant to keep it up to the bitter end, as we must do as far as Brian is concerned—but you are my daughter. And besides, really"—Mr. Fairclough sounded faintly indignant—"it's getting beyond a joke. I never for one moment supposed he'd keep it up like this. And the expense——"

"Father, I wish you'd say something I could understand."

"My dear, I'm going to. The fact of the matter is that your husband has been playing a little game—the sort of game that millionaires do play when the fancy strikes them, quite a romantic little joke. You remember how misanthropic and cynical he was. Well, he wanted to prove himself in the right, as it were—and so he just did a sham smash. He's not ruined at all."

"It's a lie!"

"My dear Elizabeth!"

"It's a lie!"

Mr. Fairclough, who had a great sense of decorum, thanked Providence that they were in a quiet street, for she had turned on him with a scorn, an anger that would have been highly disconcerting if there had been any spectators.

"You have no right to say such things about my husband!" she cried out.

Mr. Fairclough looked aggrieved.

"Well, they happen to be true. I know for a fact. Wishard gave him the idea, and Wishard told me."

"I can't, I won't believe it!"

"Well, I'd stake a good deal on it—in fact, I have staked a good deal. If you knew what Wishard squeezed me for——"

She had gone suddenly deadly quiet, and he waited a minute to let the idea sink into her. A quick glance at her profile assured him that she was beginning to understand.

"Why, I thought you'd be pleased," he said at last.

"You give me your word that it's true?"

Mr. Fairclough looked playful.

"Well, of course the wish may be father to the thought. I must say I do prefer millionaires to paupers, but I wouldn't find much satisfaction in lying about it."

"Then—he did it to win me? He knew what I felt. He said he always won in the end—he always got his way—fair means or foul."

Here was another case for psychological treatment. Mr. Fairclough knew all about women. He smiled slyly.

"Well, who can blame him? A man in love, eh? All's fair in love and war." He had a sudden qualm, coming from he didn't know where. "Elizabeth, you're not upset?"

She lifted her eyes to his. They were dark and hard with an expression which Mr. Fairclough had never seen there before.

"I knew all the time that *you* were cheating," she said quietly. "I felt it in my blood. I know you and all those men too well to believe that you could be generous and loyal and disinterested. But I couldn't understand, and I tried to think I was mistaken. Now I *do* understand. You meant to humbug him into thinking you were his devoted friends, so you could have a claim on him afterward that he could never deny. Well, he deserved you. One cheat for another. He cheated me."

"Elizabeth!"

"I—I was so happy. I had never thought of *that*. My instinct was against you—not against him. I so loved and trusted him."

"My child, after all, he paid you a compliment."

"A lie is never a compliment."

"Your sense of humor——"

"Do you think that more important than a sense of honor?"

"For Heaven's sake"—he found himself trotting after her in a fashion entirely unsuited to his bulk and any kind of reasonable conversation—"for Heaven's sake—look here! I say, you know—you promised me—— If you—tell him—spoil everything——"

"A sense of honor is useful sometimes, isn't it?" she answered bitterly. "You needn't be afraid. I've promised."

"Then—oh, do walk sensibly! I'm an old man. It's not good for me."

"I want to be alone."

"Let me go home with you. We— we could—have—a nice—cozy—chat——"

"I'm not going home."

If he had had any breath to spare, Mr. Fairclough would have screamed with exasperation.

"Then where *are* you going?"

"I don't know."

They had come out into a main thoroughfare. A bus rolling within easy distance of the curb offered escape, and Elizabeth, being young and modern, leaped for it and leaped successfully. The conductor gave her an admiring glance and a scientific lift under the elbow and rang his bell. Mr. Fairclough was left standing on the pavement, whilst his faith in psychology vanished with the bus.

CHAPTER VIII.

"If only I was a little younger," said Mr. McCormick wistfully. "Just a little younger, Wyatt. I'm not a fit partner for you. This is a young man's game. If I should fail—fail physically when the time comes—who is there to take my place? When I think of it at night, I get afraid."

Brian put his arm over the old man's bent shoulders.

"You're not going to fail. You're going to see the dream of your life fulfilled. One morning Liverpool—the next the Statue of Liberty like a doll's figure underneath you. We'll be the most famous people in the world. The newspapers will be full of us. We'll have pots of money and a house in Park Lane and an estate in Scotland and too much to eat for the rest of our lives."

"You talk as if you'd never had all these things," said Mr. McCormick, smiling.

"Well, I haven't—not really. You can't possess things you haven't paid for—and I hadn't paid for them. They were stolen apples, and they gave me a bad pain, as all stolen apples do, according to the storybooks for good children. And I don't know even whether I want them again—not at the bottom of my heart. I'm jolly happy as I am. A hard day's work, a bit of worry, tired muscles, a home to go to, and a real fine pal to meet you—what more does a man want? By Jove, I should never have thought that a red-brick villa could be an earthly paradise! But it can be. I've got one of my own. I've heart-beatings when I think of it. I've got them now. Second childhood, eh?"

"Your first boyhood," Mr. McCormick suggested wisely.

"Well, perhaps you're right." He drew a deep, contented sigh. "Anyhow, I am—jolly happy. And by the way—what the devil is that sitting on my own hard-earned doorstep?"

They had come in sight of the heart-troubling villa, and the spectacle that greeted them justified Wyatt's exclamatory question. Mr. McCormick, who was shortsighted, refused to compromise himself further than a vague surmise that it might be a sack of coals. This suggestion was at once refuted by the dark object's rising and tilting its shiny top hat in salutation, and re-

placing it at a dare-devil angle with a smart tap on the crown.

"Mr. Wyatt, I believe?" Evidently the stranger realized that it is unusual for well-dressed persons to sit on doorsteps and he hastened to add, "My name's Lewisohn—of Lewisohn & Isaacs. Permit me—here is my private card. I've been knocking at your door for about an hour, but as no one answered, I supposed the maid was out—"

"The maid is always out," said Wyatt solemnly.

"And as I was determined to see you if possible, I took the liberty of sitting down and waiting. I'm glad to say no one saw me—not even a policeman. A most delightful neighborhood."

"Which shows your ignorance of rural conditions," said Wyatt. "Everybody saw you. They're looking at us now from behind the curtains. Our already doubtful reputations will have become a shade more dubious by tomorrow morning. If you want to see me—if it's urgent—"

"It is urgent," said Mr. Lewisohn.

"Then we'd better go in," said Wyatt resignedly.

He opened the door with a latchkey and led the way into the narrow little hall. He seemed himself vaguely puzzled and even uneasy, as if the darkness and the silence troubled him. On the threshold of the sitting-room, he lingered a moment, listening, and he lit the lamp with a reckless disregard for the nature of glass, which brought instant disaster. The funnel cracked promptly. Wyatt gave up the struggle at once and lit a candle.

"She must be out," he said. "I expect she went to meet me. She often does. If you'll excuse me, I'll just run out and—"

Mr. Lewisohn smiled and coughed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Wyatt, I'm a business man, you know, and time's money.

I've been sitting an hour on your doorstep."

"I didn't ask you to," Wyatt interjected, with unjustifiable rudeness.

"—and I mean to have my little talk right here and now," concluded Mr. Lewisohn, unruffled and determined.

Wyatt swore under his breath. He went over to the dying fire and gave it its *coup de grâce* with a poker. Evidently its decease added to his uneasiness.

"She must have been out for a long time," he muttered.

"Our business is confidential," said Mr. Lewisohn, looking at Mr. McCormick.

Mr. McCormick at once rose to go; whereat Wyatt roused himself sufficiently to remark that he never did business without his partner.

"Besides, I haven't any secrets," he added.

"Not one, Mr. Wyatt?" Lewisohn inquired archly.

"Not one."

"Then Wishard told me another of his precious lies," Mr. Lewisohn broke out with unexpected violence. "He told me there were only ten other people in the know, and this gentleman wasn't one of them. I dare say there are dozens, if I only knew. Excuse me, Mr. Wyatt, I'm afraid your doorstep hasn't improved my temper. The fact is, Mr. Wishard hasn't treated me fairly. He hasn't treated me as one gentleman should treat another."

"Wishard isn't a gentleman," Wyatt remarked, still poking disconsolately at the embers. "Perhaps that explains it. None of us are gentlemen. My father was a bootblack, and we're all bootblacks with a gold polish. But we shall improve. Even I may be a presentable ancestor by the time I've done. Mr. McCormick, I do wish you'd run out and see if my wife's in sight, like a good fellow."

McCormick made for the door at once. He was glad to go, as the visitor showed increasing signs of indignation, and the old man hated scenes. Even as he opened the front door, he heard Lewisohn's fat voice rising like a wind:

"Mr. Wishard owes me money, sir. It's not as if I hadn't been patient; sir. I have been patient. I've been a real friend. I've borne with his shilly-shallyings and lies till I've been quite ashamed of myself. But when he starts buying Miss Teeny Trotwell motor cars and diamond bracelets, then—then it's too much. As I told him, 'If you've money to spare, you'll pay me. It isn't as if I had Mr. Wyatt to fall back on,' I said. And I've got to have my money somehow."

"I wish people wouldn't stay out late," said Wyatt, going over to the window and peering out into the twilight. "It makes one absurdly anxious. What a good thing we don't live in the days of brigands, isn't it, Mr.—Mr.—eh?"

"We do live in the days of brigands," Mr. Lewisohn retorted heatedly. "It's as hard as it ever was for an honest man to keep his money. As I said to Wishard, 'When the devil am I going to get my two thousand pounds?' I threatened him and got him fairly scared. And it was then he gave me the wink." Mr. Lewisohn hesitated and looked faintly apologetic. "Of course, strictly speaking, I'm on oath, and I like to keep my word when I can. On the other hand, I had no idea that the joke was going on like this. I'm a business man and I can't wait forever. Of course—any guarantee from you, Mr. Wyatt, would put a different complexion on the affair."

Wyatt laughed impatiently.

"What's the good of coming to me? By Jove, I thought it was she! Queer how this light deceives you! It's the charwoman next door. Not very flat-

tering mistake, eh? I beg your pardon—what were you saying?"

"I was saying, if only you'd give me your assurance that I'd get my money, I'd wait gladly. Heaven knows I wouldn't like to press your cousin, Mr. Wyatt——"

"Very kind of you. But as my present salary is three pounds a week——"

Mr. Lewisohn's beady eyes twinkled in the candlelight.

"Oh, come, Mr. Wyatt! I've just told you I know."

"Know what?"

"Why, what Wishard knows—what all your best friends know—Mr. Fairclough and all that gang."

Wyatt came slowly back from the window. For the first time, he gave his visitor his whole attention.

"What do they know?"

"Why, that all this business"—Mr. Lewisohn waved a fat hand comprehensively—"this business is a put-up job. In straight English, you're shamming, Mr. Wyatt. You're just putting your friends on trial. And a very good trial it would have been, too, if Wishard hadn't sold the joke to his friends at a thousand pounds a head."

Wyatt had gone straight to the mantelpiece. A letter that he had not seen before stood propped up against the clock. He held it for a moment as if he dared not open it. Even Mr. Lewisohn, who was not usually sensitive, felt a vague discomfort creeping over him. He began to wonder if, after all, he had done the wise thing. This young man had an unmanageable look about him. He might be dangerous. He would undoubtedly be obstinate.

"What is it you know, Mr. Lewisohn?"

"I assure you," said the unhappy little Jew, "I haven't any desire to poke into your affairs. Your secret is as safe with me as if it were locked up in the Bank of England. All I want——"

"What is my secret?"

"Wishard told me"—Mr. Lewisohn licked his cracked lips—"he told me that you weren't ruined at all. He said you'd faked the whole smash."

Wyatt had opened his letter at last. He held it to the candlelight and, though it was obviously only a brief note, he did not move or speak for a long minute. Even when he did at length break the silence, he did not look at Mr. Lewisohn. His voice sounded unnaturally quiet.

"So that's my secret—that's what Fairclough and everybody knows. They've been playing up to me, humoring my millionaire's fancy? So that I should know who my real friends are and do my duty by them?"

"Human nature is human nature," Mr. Lewisohn remarked apologetically; adding with more confidence, "And business is business."

"I see. The whole thing would have been an awfully good joke—in fact, it is a good joke—much better than my loyal, devoted friends think. It's enough to make a funeral mute shriek with laughter."

Mr. Lewisohn looked as if he had tumbled inadvertently into the path of a cyclone.

"I'm glad you take it like that, Mr. Wyatt."

"Of course I take it like that. Do you think I haven't got a sense of humor? Do you think I'm going to sit down and howl because the whole pack of you are— Oh, it's a jest of the first water! But somehow I have an idea, Mr. Lewisohn, that you haven't quite seen the point of it even yet."

"Wh—what point?"

"The real point—Wishard's point. He's made you pay a thousand pounds a head for it. You ought to get the full flavor out of it. My God, what a genius to have in the family! Hasn't it dawned on you yet? I *am* ruined. It's

not a fake. You can go and tell it to the lot of them. One of them knows already. Why, I hadn't the energy to scheme a thing like that. I didn't think Wishard had it in him, either. But then I'm no judge of character. Anybody can fool me. I've been believing in people just as you've been believing in my millions—and with about as much reason. I've been a laughingstock. Well, I—I've got the sense of humor to laugh louder than the lot of you." Suddenly he pounced on Mr. Lewisohn and swung him round as if he had been a tailor's dummy on a pivot. "You'd better go—you'd better go at once, Mr. Lewisohn!"

Mr. Lewisohn went. He did not wait to argue. He did not question the disastrous revelation that had been flung at him. With the unerring intuition of his race, he realized that there were worse things awaiting him than financial loss and that a broken neck was one of them. He went scudding down the steps of the villa just as Mr. McCormick came up them.

"I'm awfully sorry, Wyatt. I haven't seen your wife anywhere——"

"I didn't expect you to." In the street lamplight, Mr. McCormick caught a glimpse of the face above him.

"You see—she's not coming back."

"Not coming back!"

But the door was already shut, slammed with a terrible finality, and there was no answer but the sound of blind footsteps stumbling along the passage of the earthly paradise.

CHAPTER IX.

"Face 'em," whispered Mr. McCormick huskily. "Don't let 'em get on your back. I know the breed. Cowards—the whole lot! They've done a dirty trick, and it'll make them the more mad to drag you down. You've got to stand up and blackguard them. Don't let them force your hand. As

soon as I'm on my legs again, we'll show them we had a right to their help. We'll pay them back with fifty per cent interest. And then you need never see their faces again."

Wyatt pressed the sick man's hand.

"Don't be afraid. They'll get no satisfaction out of me. I've nothing to lose. Having nothing to lose makes a man devilish strong. Get well soon. I want to get out of this—out of this country—away from everything."

"Yes—I know. I'll try. My poor boy, you're sure—you're sure you're not misjudging any one in the bitterness of your heart?"

"Sure. Perhaps they put her up to it, but she played their game. She left me when she found out. A rotten tree can't bear good fruit. I might have known that."

Mr. McCormick shook his gray head.

"You can't judge men as you judge trees. You need two human beings to make another, and one of them may be false and another sound."

Wyatt did not answer. His thin, white face was hard set.

"I've got to go now."

"Good luck, dear fellow."

Half an hour later, Wyatt stood on the Faircloughs' doorstep. It was raining, and the soaking misery of the night added to his sense of wretchedness and destitution. In the ruin of his fortunes, he had felt so splendidly rich and free. The world and the future had been at his feet; it had been a rebirth—a flooding of the veins with youth and ardor and a faith he had never known. Now he was really destitute, really alone.

The butler took his dripping umbrella and his wet overcoat as if they had been plague infected. Once upon a time, he had fawned like a dog. The man was funny, regularly funny, like a music-hall comedian. Wyatt could have laughed aloud. But once upon a

time, too, there had been a woman in this house. He almost expected to see her coming down the staircase, a fine and gracious vision. And the laugh stuck in his throat.

"Mr. Wyatt, sir."

The door was held open for him with an insolent respect, and he went in. It was the dining room, where he had so often sat as an honored, courted guest. Now there was no feast spread for him. The handsome oak table was littered with papers and encircled by the twelve men who formed the board of the Magnus Company. One chair at the bottom of the table had been left free. Wyatt went straight to it, but he did not sit down. He stood there, his eyes passing from face to face till they met Wishard's. Then he laughed, and there was a general stir of consternation. Mr. Wishard leaned back further in his chair and studied the ceiling from amidst a hurriedly ejected cloud of smoke. Mr. Fairclough gave him a glance of extreme dislike and turned to his papers.

"Well, gentlemen of the jury?"

They looked in his direction, but not at him. Some of them nodded vaguely in salutation. Mr. Fairclough cleared his throat.

"I think, gentlemen, we had better get to business at once."

"By all means."

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Wyatt?"

"Thanks, I'd rather stand."

He had in his mind old McCormick's warning. He could fight them better on his feet. Mr. Fairclough rose, and the two men faced each other down the length of the table. Wyatt thought, "This is her father," and felt the blood surge to his face.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Fairclough, "you know the sort of person I am. I can't beat about the bush if I try, and on this occasion I shan't try. It's a painful business, and we'd better get straight to the point. The plain

facts of the case are these: We twelve form the Magnus Aëroplane Company. We financed it. We did so at the desire and suggestion of Mr. Wyatt. Now we are business men, but we are not mechanics. We had to rely on the opinion of an expert. Mr. Wyatt was a well-known airman, and we accepted his judgment. We went ahead with a generosity and an enthusiasm which no one will deny. It is my unpleasant duty to inform the company that we were misled—willfully misled."

There was an angry murmur. Mr. Wishard nodded viciously.

"Damnably misled!"

"What right have you to say that?"

"Mr. Wyatt asks what right I have. I answer that I have consulted various other experts, and their opinions absolutely confirm my fears. It's a wild-cat scheme, gentlemen, and the sooner we acknowledge it, the better. I repeat—we were misled."

"By whom?"

"By you, Mr. Wyatt."

"You thought I was still a millionaire. Did I tell you so?"

"You told Mr. Wishard. You gave him to understand that it was a kind of practical joke you were playing. Mr. Wishard, in his anxiety that you should not suffer discomfort, gave your friends a hint."

"An expensive hint. If it was all for my sake, why did you pay a thousand pounds for it? I'll tell you. You thought it cheap at the price. You thought to put me under such obligation that you could sponge on me for the rest of my life."

"Mr. Wyatt——"

"For God's sake, try and behave like a gentleman!" Mr. Wishard pleaded plaintively.

"Why should I? I'm not a gentleman. I've lost my money. I never pretended that I hadn't. That was my cousin's idea—an admirable little joke at your expense, gentlemen."

Mr. Wishard gasped and made a movement as if appealing to high Heaven.

"Didn't I suggest it to you? Didn't I say, 'If you don't trust your friends, test 'em. Pretend to lose your money.' Didn't I?"

"You may have done. It so happens that I've never yet followed any of your suggestions, my dear fellow."

"Did you or did you not continue to pay me my allowance?"

"I did."

"Well, then! Either you weren't ruined or you'd gone out of your mind!"

Wyatt smiled bitterly.

"You know now that I was out of my mind," he said.

There was another murmur. It was evident that Wyatt and Mr. Wishard shared the popular indignation between them. Mr. Wishard spread out his fat white hands.

"I have been deceived," he wailed, "utterly deceived!"

"And a jolly good thing you've made out of it!" an infuriated neighbor retorted nastily. "What about that thousand of mine? What about that sure inside information?"

"We've been rooked. I don't care whose fault it is. We've lost our money. It's a case for the public prosecutor."

"And be made a laughingstock for the country. No, thanks. We must save what we can."

"I believe it's a put-up job."

"If anybody doubts my honor," shouted Mr. Wishard, slamming the table with his fist, "I'll challenge him!"

What form the challenge would have taken he did not explain. Mr. Fairclough reasserted himself and the stormy chorus died down.

"We must really keep our dignity, gentlemen. I know, of course, that the provocation has been great. But we must not forget what we owe our-

selves. It is the custom of human beings to impute their own motives to others. Mr. Wyatt accuses us of hypocrisy. Well, I won't deprive him of that satisfaction. Our own consciences uphold us. We supported his scheme because we believed that he gave it his own support—that he had a stake in it."

Wyatt leaned forward.

"And *haven't* I a stake in it? When the first flight is made, McCormick and I make it. If we fail, it's more than money we are going to lose."

"There will never be a first flight. The machine is incapable of getting to the coast."

"That is a lie!"

"Prove that it's a lie."

"I'm going to. I shall not only prove it, but you shall have your money back twice over."

"And when, pray, is this most desirable event to take place?"

Wyatt held himself in for a moment longer.

"Mr. McCormick is ill. It is indispensable that I should have some one with me whom I can trust—whose nerve and knowledge and loyalty I can rely on. As soon as Mr. McCormick is strong enough——"

A ripple of angry laughter interrupted him.

"Oh, yes! There'll always be some excuse like that! There are skilled men enough to take McCormick's place."

"I can't have a stranger. After all, the new mechanism is a secret."

"A great secret!"

"You'd never get any one fool enough to go with you."

"You're not fool enough to go yourself."

They were on him now—the whole pack—in full cry. He drew himself up to meet them. And then his eyes fell on the painting above the mantelpiece. The thought that she might be

somewhere near at hand—that even her portrait should witness his humiliation—goaded him to a white, cold fury of resolution. McCormick's warning was forgotten. He turned on the shouting mob of his tormentors with a gesture that silenced them.

"Very well. You challenge me. I accept the challenge. The machine is ready. I'll make a trial flight to-morrow. On Wednesday I'll attempt to cross the Atlantic to New York. I hope, then, gentlemen, that if I succeed, you'll be satisfied—and that if I fail, you'll admit that I have met my share of the liability. You can communicate my plan to the press, so that there can be no backing out for me. I wish you good evening, gentlemen!"

They were silenced. But also he was bitterly aware that they had won. They had got him down. They would have their pound of flesh from him. Not that it mattered—not that anything mattered now.

Fairclough accompanied him to the door, the embodiment of awkward good nature.

"A bad mistake, Wyatt."

"Very bad."

"Mustn't think hard things of us. All human. You couldn't really have expected us to behave in that sort of 'Christmas Carol' way, now, could you?"

"No—it was idiotic of me."

"As a private individual, Wyatt, I'm deuced sorry about the whole thing. It's more painful for me than for any one."

Wyatt nodded.

"Obviously. You played with higher stakes. May I ask if—if your daughter is here?"

"Of course. Where else should she go, poor girl?"

"I don't know. Will you give her my—my congratulations. Her histrionic talent, with your business acumen, should prove irresistible. Ask her to

accept my sincere regrets for my own incredible fatuity and assure her that—that she shall have her freedom.”

Mr. Fairclough bowed.

“I expected no less from you, my dear Wyatt.”

When he had closed the door on his son-in-law, Mr. Fairclough strolled back leisurely to the dining room. On the way, he encountered Mr. Wishard, who appeared to be in a great hurry, and took him gently, but firmly by the arm.

“If you let Wyatt know that Elizabeth has disappeared,” he said, “and if you should meet Elizabeth and give her any inkling as to what has really happened, I’ll have you prosecuted for fraud, even if it blasts my career! You understand?”

Mr. Wishard looked unutterably hurt.

“Don’t you trust me?” he asked.

“No, I don’t,” said Mr. Fairclough.

CHAPTER X.

It is one thing to live on three pounds a week. It is another to spread the proceeds from the sale of a pearl brooch over the rest of one’s life. Elizabeth had tried it, and the experiment was going badly. Funds were sinking in spite of the most rigorous economy, and an increasing tendency to melancholia warned her that the siege diet was not agreeing with her. When her little landlady planted the daily herring before her, a positive distaste for life swept over her.

“I’m not hungry,” she said wearily.

“Oh, yes, you are,” said Mrs. Tupper kindly. “I knows that feelin’. You go without a square meal long enough and by and by the very thought of such a thing turns your stummick. Now, if I was to suggest a nice, juicy bit of *steak*—”

Elizabeth shook her head.

“It’s awfully kind of you to worry.

But I—I can’t afford things like that—not till I’ve begun to earn my living, at any rate. You see, I’m awfully poor—”

“You don’t look poor,” said Mrs. Tupper unexpectedly. “Your clothes ain’t poor, and your manners ain’t poor. You ain’t got that ‘excuse me’ look of real poor folks. Look ‘ere, my dear”—she patted her lodger on the arm with her toil-worn hand—“look ‘ere. I don’t usually interfere with folks—‘tain’t my way—but I’m old enough to be your mother and I likes your face. I can see as plain as anything you ain’t meant for this sort of business, and I’d like ter ‘elp you—I would really, now.”

“I’m afraid no one can help me,” Elizabeth answered.

She was not given to tears, and fought desperately against them, but in the end she was crying broken-heartedly against Mrs. Tupper’s shoulder. That lady showed prompt and complete understanding.

“There, there, dearie, ‘e ain’t worth it, take my word for it. None of ‘em are of any good. But then we wimmen is all alike, too. Always a-fergivin’ and goin’ back. You’ll forgive ‘im, dearie, and maybe it’s all for the best. Maybe we was meant to look after the poor, feckless loonies.”

Elizabeth made a gallant fight to stop crying.

“It’s—it’s a thing you couldn’t forgive—a thing that kills trust and affection—and—and everything. There’s no going back—ever—”

“Is it as bad as that? Well, as you don’t love ‘im no more, I wouldn’t cry no more, either. But p’raps it’s that there fish wot’s worrying you, and I don’t wonder. ‘Ere, I’ve had this up my sleeve for you all this time.”

It was not precisely up her sleeve. She had kept it out of sight, however, and now, with the flourish of a successful conjurer, she set it before her

protégée—a lovely cut of juicy steak lying in its wrappings of clean newspapers.

"Ow's that? Makes you 'ungry to look at it, eh, wot?"

Elizabeth's sense of humor came unexpectedly to life, but laughter on the top of tears and a long sequence of meatless days is dangerous. Mrs. Tupper realized, to her consternation, that hysterics were not far off, and was gazing around anxiously for the inevitable jug of cold water when something unexpected happened.

Suddenly her lodger grew quite still. Tears and laughter were gone as swiftly as they had come. The young woman sat forward with her face between her hands and gazed at the piece of steak as if it were the most amazing, astonishing, absorbing thing that she had ever seen. Her lips were compressed, her brows knitted. She did not hear Mrs. Tupper when she spoke to her.

Mrs. Tupper, realized, of course, that to a starving soul, a really prime piece of rump steak like that might prove overwhelming, but this silence was uncanny. She was thoroughly alarmed when suddenly her lodger got up, seized her hat and coat, and made for the door. Now no woman in her right senses starts going out before she has got her hat on, and not only was Elizabeth's hat not on when she started, but it was back to front by the time she reached the bottom of the stairs. Mrs. Tupper screamed the fact to her, and she righted the offending headgear, but with a fierce indifference which suggested an entirely unbalanced intellect.

"I'm going out, Mrs. Tupper."

"But, dearie—"

The door slammed. Mrs. Tupper went back to the steak and subjected it to a long and careful examination.

Elizabeth took a taxi. The taxi man appeared to have a rooted and aristocratic prejudice against suburbs and

had to be bribed to an extent which excluded even herring from the future menu. But Elizabeth was not interested in the future beyond the next twenty-four hours. There was something set and determined and reckless about her that sent the little maid-of-all-work at the boarding house scudding before her like a leaf before the wind.

Nor had McCormick, huddled up wretchedly before his fire, any opportunity to protest. She was in the room, with the door closed behind her, before he had even realized who his visitor was. But the next minute he was on his feet, wavering, but upheld by a gust of righteous indignation. Hitherto he had looked up to her with shy reverence and adoration. He had felt himself a sort of harmless old Caliban before a bright, particular spirit. Now he hated her with the merciless hatred of a disappointed worshiper. His hatred blazed at her out of his sunken eyes. It shook the whole of his frail, broken body.

"What do you want?" he asked brutally. "What right have you to come here like this?"

"I've come to know if it's true."

"What's true?"

"I saw it in the evening paper. They say he's going to make this flight tomorrow. Is it true?"

"Yes, it is."

"Alone?"

"Inevitably. I'm too ill. I'd be a danger."

"Why doesn't he wait?"

"You and your father know why better than any one."

"I don't know any thing. If I knew, I shouldn't come here, should I?"

"I don't know what you're capable of."

"You're very rude, Mr. McCormick."

"I feel rude," said Mr. McCormick savagely. "I love Wyatt. He's like a son to me. And you've messed up

his life. You're helping to murder him."

"How dare you?"

"I do dare. It is murder. It's criminal to force him to go alone like that. He ought to have refused—he ought to have defied the whole of you—but you've broken his heart—you've goaded him—and he doesn't care."

Elizabeth deserted her place of defiance at the door. She came into the lamplight, and for the first time, Mr. McCormick became aware of something disheveled and desperate in her appearance.

"I suppose it's another plot," she observed bitterly.

"You know best about that," he retorted.

"You must understand me," she continued. "I've not come here for a reconciliation. I don't love my husband. I can't forgive what he did to me."

Mr. McCormick raised his clenched hands above his head.

"What did *he* do to you, in Heaven's name?"

"He deceived me."

"He never did! You thought he did! You're so full of schemes and trickery yourself that you can't believe in straight dealing. There must always be something behind everything. And now you're mad because he told you the truth, but he was fool enough to believe that you really loved him—that his money had been only an obstacle—"

"It was. Haven't I proved it?"

"You've proved that you cared for nothing else."

"Are you mad, Mr. McCormick? If that were true, I should never have left him. I should have accepted his deceit—"

Mr. McCormick almost screamed:

"He never deceived you!"

"He told me he was ruined."

"And it was the truth. Do you call that deceit? Was it his fault that you tricked yourselves?"

"But he's not ruined."

Mr. McCormick sank back in his chair.

"I've been very ill," he said weakly. "I can't stand much. I wish you'd go, Mrs. Wyatt. You and your father know quite well what has happened."

"My father told me that Brian had just pretended to be poor in order to win me. I left Brian that night. I haven't seen my father since. I don't know what you mean."

Mr. McCormick bent forward, staring at her.

"You mean—you don't know? You believed—you believed—— Good God—Mrs. Wyatt, you're not playing?"

"Do I look like it? I wouldn't go near my father. He's deceived me, too. But when I saw that about Brian—I had to do something. One can't forget—people one's loved."

She was quite close to him. He stretched out his shaking hand and caught hold of her.

"Mrs. Wyatt, then you don't know how they treated him? When they found out that it was the truth he had told, they were like a lot of wolves. They'd have torn him to pieces. They drove him to do this mad, reckless thing. And he's doing it because he doesn't care what happens. He loved you. It's just broken his heart."

"He thought I—I was one of them—driving him on?"

"Yes."

She dropped suddenly on her knees at McCormick's side. Her face was turned to the firelight, and what he saw made him stretch out his hand and touch her with a pitying tenderness.

"We've got to stop him," she whispered. "He mustn't do it."

"My dear, he will—he must."

"Even if I explain——"

"He's given his word. Besides, he's been too badly hurt. He would only think that you had more conscience than the rest. Another time, he might believe, but the wound is too new——"

"It needs something big," she went on as if to herself, "something he would have to believe. And we've got to find it—we must!"

"What is there, my poor child? Perhaps in time—if he succeeds——"

"No. It must be now or never. If he succeeds, if he returns famous, what will *my* return, my protestations mean? He's got to believe now—when he's down—without a friend—in danger."

There was a long silence. McCormick stared hopelessly into the fire. It seemed so useless to think, and he was worn with sickness and anxiety. He scarcely noticed her when she rose quietly from his side. He was half-conscious when she slipped the pen into his shaking hand. Her voice was calm, oddly triumphant.

"Now write—just as I tell you."

"Mrs Wyatt——"

"It's our only chance," she said.

He looked up at her. A faint mischievous crept into his sunken eyes.

"But you said you didn't love him."

She took no notice.

"Please write as I say. Quick! And then I'm going to buy a steak—two steaks—and cook them over your fire. Now—please. 'My dear Wyatt——'"

He obeyed meekly. Once in the letter he paused.

"But my dear lady, I can't—I can't——"

"You must." She laughed suddenly. "Oh, don't you understand?"

"You mean——" "It isn't possible!"

"It's got to be possible."

"He would never forgive me."

"What does that matter to me," she retorted callously, "as long as I'm forgiven? Now, please go on."

CHAPTER XI.

They were all there, even Mr. Wishard, who, with an air of injured innocence, went about offering heavy odds against his cousin's so much as reaching the coast intact. The offer was not accepted, partly because most people shared his obvious conviction and partly because they did not believe Mr. Wishard could pay up even if by any conceivable chance he lost.

Mr. Lewisohn said so, and was very coarse about it. In fact, there was a general atmosphere of ill-feeling. The members of the Magnus Company eyed each other and Mr. Wishard and the huge machine standing in their midst with sully distrust. A reporter who attempted to interview Mr. Fairclough was snubbed, and reported to his confrères that the whole crowd had evidently got the wind up and no mistake, and that probably there was going to be a frightful accident. Whereat the rest of the audience, who were equally prepared to howl plaudits to a successful national hero or be deliciously thrilled by his decease, felt more hopeful.

They cheered when the tall, leather-clad figure strode out of the hangar, and scarcely noticed that he neither replied to their acclamation nor took the hands that were tentatively offered him. He went straight to the machine and climbed up into his seat, where he appeared solely occupied in examining levers and adjustments. But once or twice he looked around anxiously.

"No one sees anything of McCormick?"

The mechanic standing by one of the huge propellers came forward.

"A taxi drove up just as you left the aérodrome, sir. Mr. McCormick was already in his kit. He'll be here in a minute."

"Ask him to hurry."

He was mad to be gone. He wanted

to get away from these smooth-smiling, treacherous faces. He felt as some poor, goaded bull feels when the ring of toreadors closes round on him and the spectators lean forward to see the *coup de grâce*.

He was a show, a spectacle to all this gaping multitude. They did not care whether he lived or died, but just as he had been in the days of his wealth, so now he was a source of amusement, of possible advantage. They came here to see him die or to get their money. Something they would get out of him, whatever happened. If only one of them had cared, if only one of them had kept faith, had been as he had believed her to be for three short months! But his first judgment on men and women had been right, without flaw, without exception. Not even one!

He longed for the cold, clean air, for the high altitudes, the wide spaces where he would have no enemy but the wind and the storm. He longed for the old victorious beating of his heart as the world dropped from beneath him. But now he felt chill and dull and vaguely distrustful. For the first time, he doubted himself and the machine on which his life and honor depended. He saw before him the interminable hours, the bitter strain, the appalling isolation. He did not shrink from it; he sank under it as under a burden he no longer cared to carry. He simply did not care. In these last weeks, something had sapped the energy and hope from him. It had been a slow, insidious process, but it was complete. He had had wealth and power and everything that wealth and power carry in their train. He had had what passed for love and friendship. He had climbed every height in the mountain range of human experience, and the view from all of them was equally dull and insipid. Now what was left to achieve? Another

sort of wealth, another sort of fame, another sort of love?

No, decidedly it was not worth while. When he saw McCormick come toward him, he made a gesture of impatience. It was too bad of the old man to add himself to the burden. He did not want a life on his conscience. Besides, McCormick was obviously not fit. His shambling gait was accentuated, as if the weight of his fur-lined leather kit were in itself too much for him. The wisp of gray hair showing under the close-fitting cap added to his look of infirmity. Wyatt leaned over toward him.

"I got your note," he said in a low tone. "I sent back to say you would be more anxiety than you're worth. But of course, if you will, you must. But I warn you, I'm not the man I was. I've got to go, but you can keep out of it."

McCormick merely shrugged his shoulders and climbed up into his place behind the pilot. The telephone was fixed between them, the cunning wind-cutting shield adjusted. Wyatt raised his hand to give the signal. At that moment he caught sight of Mr. Wishard and Mr. Fairclough immediately beneath him. The two gentlemen had advanced simultaneously, as if moved by a common impulse. Their expressions were at once anxiously cheerful, preoccupied, and somewhat self-conscious, suggesting two persons trying to balance on a narrow fence without undue appearance of effort. Mr. Wishard patted the wing of the already quivering machine as if it had been the flank of a racer.

"Well, good luck, old chap. Take care of yourself. Deuced plucky of you, I must say. Couldn't do it myself, dashed if I could."

"I dare say not."

"Elizabeth sent her love," said Mr. Fairclough cloudily and rather breathlessly. "Would have come herself, but

very upset—naturally. Really devoted to you, dear boy. A little spoiled, a father's darling. Mustn't take a woman's mood too seriously. Give her time—heart of gold underneath." Feeling the metaphor to be a trifle invidious, Mr. Fairclough coughed and repeated, "Really devoted," in a tone of suppressed emotion.

Wyatt laughed.

"I'll need more than your word to prove it," he said.

"If you pull this off, if you reach New York——"

"You mean—if I succeed, all might be forgiven; and forgotten?"

"What woman could resist a hero?"

Mr. Fairclough asked rhetorically.

Wyatt repeated his unpleasant little laugh.

"If I succeed, I shan't see Elizabeth again, and if I fail, I shan't see her again either. That's the whole case. Stand clear, please."

The two gentlemen stood clear. The great propellers swung into their mad dance. The whole machine came to life, quivering and straining at the leash. Wyatt lifted the brake lever. He scarcely heard the cheer that burst from the crowd behind him. It was no more than a dying whisper. A mighty wind sang in his ears. Soundlessly, the world dropped from under him. It fell away till forests were black dots in a hazy sea and rivers were threads of shining cotton.

For a moment, Wyatt felt the old thrill, the old exultant joy of life in his blood. It passed. He settled down to his task, grimly, without faith, without hope.

"Going well, isn't she?" McCormick's voice sounded shrill and unnatural. It reminded Wyatt of all that the old man stood to lose, of all the hopes and dreams that for him trembled on the borderland of reality. He braced himself with an effort.

"Splendid."

"Isn't that the sea already?"

"Yes. We're in for it now."

"How many hours of daylight have we?"

"Twelve. We must make the most of them. Are you cold?"

"Not yet."

"We must keep the heating apparatus for to-night. We shall want it. I'm not going to speak again. Give me something hot to drink every hour. Look after yourself."

"Yes. We're going to win, Brian."

"I wish I cared," Wyatt answered under his breath.

No more was said. Thereafter a deadly, stupefying monotony laid hold of them. Except for the incessant howling of the air as they cut through it, there was nothing to indicate the appalling speed at which they were traveling. Landmarks had vanished. A flat, quivering emptiness lay beneath them. There was no change but the gradual failing of light, the sharpening sting of the cold.

Almost before they knew it, night was upon them. McCormick switched on the lights, and the electric heating appliance that was to save them from the worst. In the glass before him, Wyatt caught the reflection of his companion's face. Half hidden as it was in the leather mask, the eyes two black orbs of glass, it yet gave him an odd thrill of comfort. He shook off his apathy. The monstrous cavern of darkness before them seemed less frightful, the suffering of his aching body was more endurable. He wondered how he would have felt if at the other end, at his goal, there had been something that he cared for, something that would have forced his soul to take command over his failing body. He feared his own indifference. It was like a paralysis, stealing out from his heart over his limbs and brain.

Yet he hung on. He gave his orders from time to time, and they were

obeyed promptly, without answer. His companion's endurance awoke his pity, his growing wonder. He saw how inspiration conquered physical weakness. The old man had lived for this; this was the great hour of his life, and he could not fail. He was upheld by something bigger than himself. But he, Wyatt, had nothing. He did not care. Only for his companion's sake, and at the behest of some dim, instinctive sense of duty, he held on desperately. But as the hours passed, they drew nearer to the crisis.

It came with the first gray streak of morning. Machine and man had endured a staggering test, and now both faltered. The hum of the engines was less sure, less vibrant. A voice murmured in the man's ear calling him to sleep. He knew that now was the moment when he must rouse himself to the highest effort, that only by skill and resource could he tune his machine back to its old song of strength. And he wanted to sleep; he wanted something at last; it was a desire stronger than duty. He wanted to sleep now—eternally.

"Brian!"

He jerked back in his seat. The voice had changed. It no longer tempted. It was dragging him back from the edge of an abyss. But he realized with a thrill of horror that even now they were falling. Instinct drove his hand to the lever. They rose again, bravely, gallantly.

"Brian, it was quite true what they said. She does love you. She loves you more than anything in the world."

He shook his head. He thought that, after all, he must be asleep, that this was the last dream before the end.

"No. She left me."

"Because she thought that you had tricked her, that your ruin was a pretense—a trick to win her. When she found out that it was true, she came back. She asks your forgiveness."

The voice sounded as if it were in the wind. Wyatt made a last effort.

"McCormick—old man—I'm all in—finished."

"Brian—my dear—be brave—just a little longer."

A hand stretched over his shoulder. He snatched at the steaming drink and gulped it down. It was only then that he noticed that the hand was ungloved. He stared at it—and then his eyes turned to the glass in front of him.

The disguise of gray hair and mask was gone. She was pinched and wan with cold and exhaustion, but he had never seen any one so beatiful. His senses, which had staggered on the borderland of oblivion, sprang to arms like good soldiers at the call of the bugle.

The voice sounded clearer, stronger.

"She does love you. If we are going to die—she has proved it."

He bent forward. He touched a switch here, a lever there. The roar of the engines grew louder. The machine leaped forward like a horse under the spur.

"We're not going to die," he said. "Put those infernal glasses on. I don't want a wife with red eyes. There's land over there, to the left. More oil in the A lubricator. That's it. She's picking up—do you hear? Oh, my darling!"

"You do believe?"

He did not answer. He flung a shout to the wind. It was a croaking, painful effort, but to the woman behind him it was the most splendid, triumphant cheer she had ever heard.

"Why, there's little New York—like a toy village!"

"And the Statue of Liberty—like a doll!"

"And we're the biggest things on earth." He chuckled down the telephone. "You were bound to marry some one famous."

"We're going to win?"

"I couldn't fail"—he had a flash of memory—"with you behind me."

She did not answer. He thought he heard a faint sigh of content. But it was only when they landed on the wide drill ground of Governors Island that he knew that she had fainted.

Nowadays, when anybody can fly over to New York for a week-end, the story of that first great flight is rather *vieux jeu*. But at the time it caused an immense sensation. It was a nine-days' wonder, fortified with a real "love interest," as the publishers have it. The American newspapers outdid themselves in the headlines, and the English *Times* had a leading article warning the government that if it didn't reward native heroism, "it would have to go."

Mr. Fairclough gave a great dinner to the newly floated Magnus Aëroplane Company. In an eloquent speech, he declared that he was proud of his

daughter and proud to have been the first to believe in the young man whose triumph they were celebrating. He had risked his fortune on his belief. No man could do more. He thought it was a lesson to his hearers always to have faith and to study psychology. It was through his knowledge of psychology that he, Mr. Fairclough, had made his way in life. And so on.

Mr. Wishard, whose fondness for champagne did not, unfortunately, go with a strong head, wept openly.

In spite of all this, the two people most concerned soon dropped out of the public sight. They never had a title. They never grew very rich. They never even owned a private aëroplane. But they were amazingly happy. One of their best friends was an amiable old gentleman of no pretensions. Rumor had it that he had invented the Magnus aëroplane, but any one who knew Mr. Fairclough knew better.



SILENCE AND I

THESE starry woods that dream upon the hill
Are dear to me beyond the use of speech,
Their wistful moods too shadowy and still
For words to reach.

How many times, beneath these brooding trees
That stand there, hushed, against the pensive sky,
Have we kept faith with olden memories,
Silence and I!

O God, the stillness, aching for a word!
A word, perhaps, that nevermore shall come.
And yet I wait, my soul divinely stirred,
Dreaming and dumb.

PERRIN HOLMES LOWREY.



EYES

By Arthur Crabb

Author of "The Three Women,"
"The Decision," etc.

MRS. BREWSTER herself is of no particular interest. She was a lady; none had her being in more select circles than she. Her family had been in Alden's very best society for generations, and she, beautiful and possessed of great wit, was very popular. Her husband was entirely satisfactory, and they entertained a great deal. Their dinners were attractive enough to bring Nelson Ward from New York rather often.

In Mrs. Brewster's dining room were many ornaments of various degrees of beauty and worth, and one of them, rather elaborately framed and hung on the wall, was a photograph of a woman. Nelson Ward liked women in general, beautiful women especially, and large beautiful women with undisguised admiration. He liked to look at the photograph on the wall, because it was the photograph of a ravishingly beautiful, wonderfully formed, large woman. The picture was cut off somewhere near the lady's waist.

"Who is this?" Nelson once asked Mrs. Brewster.

"My cousin, Natalie Weeks."

"Is it Natalie or the photographer's skill that I admire?"

"Natalie. She's the most beautiful creature in the world. Haven't you met her?"

"I never have. Is she maid or matron?"

"She's not married, why nobody knows. She's had enough chances for a dozen girls, and some that no girl should be allowed to refuse. I'll have her here some time when you're coming."

"I'll promise to add my name to her list of rejections."

"I'm sure you would."

That was some time in the late winter. One day during the following summer, Nelson Ward won the singles of a tennis tournament of more or less importance at a very well-known summer resort, went into the clubhouse, dressed, came out again, and joined two or three friends on the piazza. They were chatting when across the lawn and up the steps came a woman. She had been playing tennis and was dressed accordingly, but very carefully and very beautifully. She herself was, unquestionably, beautiful, but she was small. She did not weigh much more than a hundred pounds, certainly, but her figure was very nearly perfect. The moment Nelson saw her, he thought of two things, and one of them was the coxswain of his varsity crew, in his senior year. That coxswain had weighed less than one hundred and five pounds and had been the most perfectly proportioned man in the university. The other thing Nelson thought of was the photograph in Mrs. Brewster's drawing-room.

"Hello, Natalie."

Miss Weeks came toward them, and Nelson was introduced. She sat down, hardly acknowledging the introduction, raised her eyebrows, smiled in an indifferent sort of way, and asked for an orangeade.

"Been playing, of course. Who's the lucky man, Nat?"

"Bobby."

It was impossible for Miss Weeks to be interested in Bobby or anything else, notwithstanding Bobby's unquestioned attractions. She sipped her orangeade slowly. Her whole air was languid. Her eyes were heavy, and her eyes were very large and very full of lure. The eyes in the photograph had been not the least of the photograph's charm.

"Mr. Ward has just beaten one of your beaux in the finals."

Miss Weeks curled up one corner of her mouth, turned to Nelson, and regarded him with a very bored expression. Then she smiled with some effort and turned away.

"Don't you want to come over to dinner to-night?" asked Nelson's hostess.

Natalie gave her head an almost imperceptible shake.

"Awfully sorry, dear. Stevensons." She rose, nodded very slightly to Nelson, smiled a suspicion of a smile that included them all, and walked slowly into the house.

"That," thought Nelson, "is the end of the photographic romance. But it certainly fooled me, that picture. It certainly suggested a very large, husky female. But then she is husky, in a way."

The next winter Nelson Ward went to Alden on business. At four o'clock one afternoon, it was evident that the business could not be completed until the next day, and he walked over to the Windham, engaged a room, washed up, and had an evening on his hands. There were various things that he could

have done, there were several friends that he could have dropped in on, dined with, or spent the evening with, but he felt a bit lazy and not much like talking. He remembered that he had had only a bite for lunch, and went into the room where tea was served and ordered tea and toast. The prospect of dining alone was not unpleasant, and he thought that he might go to the theater afterward.

While he was waiting for his tea, he looked around the room, which was full of people. Two or three tables away, directly facing him, was Natalie Weeks. She, too, was having tea, with two women whose faces he could not see. In a moment, she looked straight at Nelson and did not show the slightest sign of recognition. She looked at him a dozen times, and finally he smiled at her. She immediately looked down at the table, very slowly raised her eyebrows, and smiled, and then said something to the two women. A moment or two later, she looked at him again, squarely in the eyes, and closed her eyes just a little. That and her expression were an unmistakable sign. A quarter of an hour after that, the two women went away, it being very evident that Miss Weeks had to make some explanation as to why she didn't go, too. She was standing, and remained so till they disappeared through the door. Then she turned toward Nelson, shot a quick glance at him, and sat down. He walked over and sat down beside her.

"Won't you have another cup of tea?"

"No, thanks. I didn't want this one. I came because I had to, not because I wanted tea. Do you often drink alone?"

"No, not unless I'm forced to. This time it was a compromise—a light dessert to finish lunch and not to spoil dinner."

"You don't live in Alden?"

"Why not?"

"If you did, you'd go to your club."

"I suppose so."

"Where do you live?"

"New York."

"Beastly place!"

"Why? I don't find it so."

"Oh, it's all fuss and feathers. No one's happy unless he's spending money."

"Do you go there much?"

"Very little. No more than I can help."

"Try living there some time as you do here. You'll find it much the same."

"No, thank you. I'm quite content in Alden."

"Are you? I rather had the idea that you were not at all contented."

"What makes you say that?"

"Watching you. You don't look—what shall I call it?—affable."

"Temporarily, possibly. I'm rather out of sorts."

"Any trouble?"

"Not particularly. Just bored to death with everything."

"It's lucky it's temporary. I rather enjoy being bored. It's unusual and rather restful."

"You looked bored enough a minute ago to be perfectly happy."

"And of course you came along and spoiled it."

"Why shouldn't I, for my own benefit? I have no interest in your happiness."

"I thought you had when you let me come over here."

"Not a bit of it. You looked as if you might be amusing."

"Do you mean semi-idiotic or witty?"

"Either—anything to give me something to do."

"You aren't offering me much chance to distinguish myself as an entertainer."

"You needn't entertain me. Sit per-

fectly quiet and lend the party an air of respectability. I shouldn't like to be seen here alone."

"Because it would indicate a lack of attention or appreciation from the world in general?"

"That's probably it."

"Tell me something about yourself."

"For instance?"

"Anything. Who are you, what you do, your views on suffrage, the tariff, religion, whether you're married—which, of course, you're not."

"How do you know that?"

"Are you?"

"No."

"Why not? That, in your case, is a perfectly safe question."

"Is that a compliment?"

"I imagine so, but one not requiring much intellect to pay. Tell me why you're not."

"I suppose I want the impossible."

"A young millionaire with great brains, beauty, and brawn?"

"How did you know?"

"Then I guessed right? Are they scarce in Alden? They are, for you are still—available."

"I'm not awfully keen on marrying any one. It would be an awful bore, I'm afraid."

"Have you ever thought of looking outside the select circle?"

"I've never thought of looking anywhere. It hasn't been necessary."

Her eyes said, "Can you imagine my having to look for a man? Can't you tell that all I have to do is to send them away in droves?"

"But perhaps it may become necessary, not to do any searching yourself, but to give a different kind of man a chance to try his luck."

"What kind of men would you recommend?"

"Poets—real ones, if there are any about—writers, a young professor or two, well spoken of, half a dozen brilliant young lawyers, three or four

stockbrokers, with nerve and a tendency toward gambling—any of them would, in all probability, keep you in water hot enough to prevent ennui."

"Surely, but I have great respect for my peace of mind. It's dependent on a substantial income. I must have that, be sure of a good home, plenty of clothes—that sort of thing."

"You look as if you were accustomed to them."

"So far," she said.

"I don't believe you would find money as important as you think, with the right man."

"Perhaps not, but I'm not going to take the chance."

"Suppose you had to. Even great fortunes are not always everlasting."

"Don't get gloomy. They're more likely to live than to be born."

"But in the meantime life is pleasant enough?"

"How could it be anything else? I have nothing to do but amuse myself."

"That opens a question, which we'll evade. You remind me of a girl I knew once."

"Who was she?"

"She didn't exist. She was purely imaginary, conceived in the brains of some men I knew once. We amused ourselves by attempting to discover the ultimate, the supreme condition of joy. The imaginary girl was it. The thing started by our wondering whether, on the average, a man or a girl had the better time in life. By life we meant that portion of life beginning, say, at eighteen or nineteen and running to marrying age. We were young, in college, and were talking about ourselves and the girls we played about with."

"Couldn't you find a definite girl?"

"It wasn't necessary. Broadly speaking, we decided that a man's pleasure was not substantial. He always had to take the initiative. He was invited to things as a matter of course, because hostesses had to have men—all they

could get, usually. Men always had to ask the girls to dance, go to games, and that sort of thing, and a man could never be sure that a girl didn't accept his invitations simply because she had nothing better to do and was pleasant as a matter of policy. Nothing a girl does, except promising to marry a man, tells him what she really thinks of him. Women are notorious liars, because in the long run it pays.

"On the other hand, the girl has positive evidence of her power if men gather about her at dances, go to see her in flocks, deluge her with invitations and flowers. She knows she is admired and sought after. The number of proposals she has is a fair indication of what men think of her."

"But how about the girls who don't have all that sort of thing?"

"It's a matter of degree, and we were talking about the girl who did. We decided that such a girl reached the pinnacle of joy—temporarily."

"Then what happened?"

"She got married and had to give it all up. It could be nothing but a memory, and there would be a dull, aching void that would hurt."

"Apparently you don't know much about married women."

"We didn't then. On the other hand, we decided that, in the long run, the man had the best of it, because he could choose his girl, on the average, oftener than the girl could choose him. Also, the girl who had not been stifled with popularity would appreciate her one man more than the other girl and have no vain regrets. All of which, I think, you will admit is silly rubbish."

"You talk as if you had a definite idea as to what sort of girl I am."

"Aren't you on the pinnacle?"

"Of course not." Her telltale eyes confessed that she knew all about the pinnacle. "But suppose I were?" she said.

"At a guess, I should say you don't find it comfortable. The edges are sharp, maybe. You're wondering how long you can hang on and be happy. That's one reason why you're talking to me. You were testing your skill and power. You don't have to do it any more. I admit it. It must be very gratifying for a girl to have it. No man could resist you for—say an evening."

"Not longer than that?" She smiled at him, as if she liked his sarcasm.

"Perhaps a week, or a month, or even a year. After that, wouldn't your eyes, for instance, become impotent?"

"Did you say something about being semi-idiotic a while ago?"

"I think I did. I'm something of a prophet."

"I should say you were."

"The mention of an evening suggests something. What do you say to a walk? It's a very fine evening."

"I'd love to. A little exercise will do me good."

They walked up Orchard Street, talking generalities, mostly about Alden. On the way back Nelson said:

"Why don't we have dinner together somewhere?"

"I have nothing to do."

"The Windham or somewhere else?"

"Of course, unless you like queer places and queer things to eat."

"Not particularly. Shall we go back there?"

"I'll have to go home first."

"Do you live near here?"

"Only a block or two away."

They turned off Orchard Street, and she stopped before a rather pretentious house.

"Shall I wait for you?"

"No, I'll meet you at the hotel at seven."

Nelson looked at his watch.

"You'll have to hurry."

"You will. I'll be on time."

"Don't you think that you should know who I am? Won't your family want to know where you're going?"

"Don't worry about my family. I'll take care of that. Hurry."

She closed the door, and Nelson walked back to the hotel. He dressed quickly and waited for her. He thought it very unlikely that she would come, and he didn't care much whether she did or not. He was, of course, perfectly sure that she did not know who he was, and in all probability she had had an hour or two with nothing to do and had amused herself in the easiest way. It had been done before by all sorts of women, and there was no harm in it. Nelson had noted that the physical languor that he had seen the summer before was gone, and her indifference to things in general seemed to have disappeared. There was a good deal of vivaciousness about her, though she seemed rather disgruntled with life in general, and hers in particular.

She came promptly at seven. She wore an opera cloak and no hat. Her hair was done very carefully; her slippers were very small and very high heeled.

"Don't you want to go to the theater?" he asked.

"Yes, let's do. Have you tickets?"

"No. Can't we get them here?"

They went to the ticket stand, discussed the plays, and got their tickets. Then, at the entrance to the dining room, she dropped her cloak into a maid's hands. Nelson Ward was no prude, very far from it. He had seen women who were entitled to great credit for the courage they showed in the matter of clothes, but he had never seen any woman anywhere who could hold a candle to Natalie Weeks.

As she walked into the dining room, men and women saw her and turned to follow her with their eyes, and Nelson saw on their faces expressions that were partly admiration and partly ques-

tioning. For the first time in his life, he felt embarrassed at being the escort of a beautiful woman. She was beautiful, there was no question of that, and she was Mrs. Brewster's first cousin.

"What," thought Nelson, "are we coming to?"

Natalie bowed to two or three people before she sat down. Then she said:

"You'd better tell me your name. I know a lot of people here. I may have to introduce you."

"What's yours?"

"What difference does that make? You don't know any one, do you?"

"I know quite a number of people in Alden. They may turn up. Besides, it's always pleasant to know the names of——"

"Mine is Eleanor Hare."

"Mine is Nelson," he said, and then added, "Ward."

The name apparently did not mean anything to her. Perhaps his inverting it, by implication, made a difference.

She asked for a cocktail. He ordered two of them, and when she saw that he would not drink his, she drank that, too. She selected a rather elaborate dinner, with some sort of claret she said she liked particularly. She had a great many rings on her fingers. Some of them were very large.

She was very entertaining. She talked with a wit that was very pleasant, and she made her eyes work constantly. There was just a suggestion of artificiality about her color and eyebrows, but it was so slight that Nelson could not be sure that it was not natural.

"If I didn't know the truth, I'd swear that she was a highly successful chorus girl in her prime," he thought. Once or twice he was sure that he saw her using her eyes for the discomfiture of some one other than himself.

They went to the theater, and, after

it, she suggested something to eat. They went back to the Windham, and she found a place where, sitting on a seat built into the corner, they were hidden from the others in the room. She asked for oysters, salad, ice cream, and champagne, and got them. Then, perhaps piqued that Nelson had shown no evidence of infatuation, she set about bringing him to his knees.

She was sitting very close to him, and she began with her eyes. There was certainly great appeal and lure in them, and she used them as a clever woman knows how to use eyes like hers. From a woman he knew nothing of, Nelson would have understood it well enough; coming from Mrs. Brewster's cousin, he did not know what to make of it. She did all the dozen things that a woman can do to show a man that she is conscious of herself, and to make him conscious of her. In a moment of carefully planned forgetfulness, she let her hand rest on his. And she showed him in every way she could that she was very much enamored of him, and very anxious to make him appreciate her, if nothing more than that.

It was crude, quite as crude as anything could have been, from Mrs. Brewster's cousin, who herself knew and was liked by very nice people. He wondered whether she would go on and on until he began to treat her as she deserved, and then suddenly freeze up, show him what sort of woman she really was, and make him, or try to make him, feel the weight of her anger.

"Is she leading me on for the fun of the thing, so as to get more fun out of giving me the deuce?" he wondered.

The waiters were gone. They had finished supper; she was smoking a cigarette and he a cigar.

"Do you often do this sort of thing, Miss Hare?"

"What sort of thing do you mean?" She looked up at him from under her long lashes with an expression, mostly

in her eyes, that said, "I'm a fascinating little devil. You and I both know that. Well?"

"Take pity on stranded men and make them happy?"

Her only answer was arched eyebrows, indicating that she did a great many things, and knew her way about, and was a good fellow generally.

"Because I've been wondering why, if it isn't a regular thing, you chose me to-night, rather than one of the many men you know."

"Fishing?"

"Hardly. I mean me simply as a man you don't know, in preference to one you do. Alden is full of men who would be glad to be in my shoes."

"Why did you ask me to dinner, and all this?"

"Perhaps for the same reason that other men have done it lots of times before."

"Why the 'perhaps'?"

"Because that isn't the real reason."

"What is?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to guess."

She made her eyes look half bored, as if she didn't know whether the subject were worth following up.

"Please tell me, that's a good boy."

"I saw a woman once who was nearly as good looking as you are and had eyes exactly like yours. All I did was to see her. I had no chance to meet her, to hear her speak. I've always wanted to know what went with eyes like hers, and like yours."

"Have you found out?"

"No. I could have made a guess—that is, I half thought I knew. Now, having had a chance to find out, I'm entirely in the dark."

"I'm glad you are. I like to please men, as all women do, and that's the best way to do it—not to let men understand you."

"Then you must please me mightily."

"Do I?"

"I didn't say that."

"Then you don't?"

"If you were one kind of woman, you would be very pleasing to a lone man; if you were another kind of woman, you would be entirely displeasing."

"But don't you know the sort of woman I am?"

"Suppose, for the sake of argument, you are that sort."

"What sort?"

"The kind that you make believe you know I think you are."

"Heavens! That's too complicated. I don't understand."

"In words of one syllable then, a good woman, not only virtuous in all things large and small, but anxious to promote virtue, a woman of refinement, a woman of good taste, a woman of education, intellect, a high place in society, and a woman who would not for the world descend to vulgarity."

"Am I all of that?"

"If you are, then why——" Nelson shrugged his shoulders. "It's becoming difficult to distinguish. I have nothing but you and your house to judge by."

"It's a very nice house."

"In a very nice part of Alden. That much is in favor of the before-described woman."

"And the evidence in her favor ends there? Oh, you funny man! You must be a minister, or a schoolteacher, or something awfully slow. Haven't you any spirit at all?"

"I have several kinds of spirit. The point is that I don't know which kind is appropriate for the occasion or the lady."

"What difference does it make? Just be happy. Love me a little. Say something nice to me." She leaned toward him till she was almost against him. "Don't you think I look worth loving—a little?" Her hand found his under the table, and if ever a woman tried to

rouse a man, she did, with every power and lure that she possessed.

"Suppose I did love you, for to-night. How about other nights?"

"Don't be foolish about love. I don't want mushy love. I want you to lose your head over me for a little while, think I'm sweet enough to eat. Come, take me home. It's late, and I don't like it here any more."

Nelson did take her. She declined a cab and they walked. She opened the door with her key, turned on the lights in the parlor, and took off her cloak.

"We won't be disturbed here," she laughed. "It's lots nicer than the Windham."

She stood in the light before him, smiling and saying as plainly as it could be said, "Well, here I am. What are you going to do about it?" The invitation was plain enough, and Nelson accepted it. He was ready, if it were a trap; and if there were to be any reckoning, he would not be the one to pay.

But it was all right. There wasn't any trap. She wanted to be kissed and fondled and loved, in the purely physical, not the mushy, way. A minute or two later, they sat down on a couch and spent an hour together quite calmly. She kissed him and let him kiss her.

Kissing leaves no mark. Nelson could not tell whether it was a pastime in which she often indulged, or whether she, in kissing, was like the man who drinks but once a year and then does it right and away from the places that know him. But it was to her, so far as he could see, a thing admittedly delightful, not improper or undignified, nothing to get excited about, a pleasure, like champagne, to be indulged in as one of the things that make the world possible. Nelson was very sure that her heart was beating no faster than it had on the club-house piazza that day in the summer, when it had been hardly

beating at all. It was like eating an ice. Nearly all women like ices.

But the rest of it he could not understand. Her gown, her eyes, her smiles, her attitudes, were no part of a lady, and her views of life, her rather morbid outlook, were no part of a woman of education, intellect, and breeding.

"But why should I worry?" he thought. "If she were half as big again as she is, she might make me a bit nervous, but this morsel! Hardly! It's amusing for a moment or two."

Natalie Weeks found that she could make very little impression on him. About two o'clock in the morning, he said good-by. With a simplicity that was very sweet, for all that had gone before it, she put her arm around him, took his hand, and said:

"Let me show you our house. Father is terribly proud of it. Do you know anything about antiques?"

Nelson did not.

"Neither do I, much, except by hearing father speak of them."

She led him about through three or four rooms, showing him pictures, furniture, jades, vases, tapestries, rugs. She laughed at them and could not remember much about them.

"But it's a very comfortable house, and it amuses father."

The house showed unmistakable signs of a sane home life, of wealth and refinement.

She went to the door with him and made some attempt to help him on with his coat.

"I come to Alden quite often," he said.

"Do you?" There was plenty of evidence in her face that the fact was not unpleasant and that the situation had possibilities.

"Shall I see you again?"

She said nothing, but her expression spoke plainly enough:

"That is, of course, for you to decide, but you won't forget me, will you?"

"Shall I send you a note, Miss Eleanor Hare, or shall I telephone you?"

She drew in a long breath and stood very straight, her arms held outward and upward. She looked up at him through those half-closed, hellish eyes of hers that were crying words of love, anguish, joy, and devilry at him. Then she turned her arms toward him, drew his head down, and kissed him, very differently than she had kissed him before.

"No, this is good-by for good, unless we meet again somewhere by chance. You've got a devil in you, Ward. I know it, even if you think you've kept it hidden, and it's the sort of devil that—that could make me lie down and roll over, or jump through a hoop, or sit up and beg, if you wanted to let it. Most men are so easy it's no fun, but you're so difficult it would be too hard work to make it worth while. Go back where you came from and stay there. I don't know who you are or what you are. I don't want you, but if I ever make such a fool of myself as to want a man, he'll be one who doesn't pay any more attention to—to what you see—than you have."

"There is a great deal to see, isn't there, Eleanor?"

"Don't you like it? I'm not selfish, not a miser."

"You certainly are not. I'm very much indebted to you."

"I don't want to let you go," she said.

"It's very nice here." "She laughed and hugged him, and in his arms said, "When you've gone, there'll be nothing to do but—go to bed, and when I wake up in the morning, it'll be the same old blank. I'll drag out breakfast, drag out the morning papers, I suppose I'll go to lunch somewhere, with a lot of gabbling women, and then—oh, just nothing! Good night."

There was one long, long embrace, and Nelson heard the door close.

He went back to New York the next day.

Spring came and with it war. When the word went flying over the land, it found him ready. He had been sure that it was coming, and his mind was made up. He was only thirty-five, and that afternoon he went to his club and played squash. He was young, and sound of mind and limb; his eye was keen, his arm was strong, his body supple. He could play the big game with the best of them.

But Nelson Ward did not go to war, he did not even buy a uniform, he did not even apply for a commission. He was a mechanical engineer, a manufacturer of machinery. He was dressing after his game when a boy came to him, saying that Mr. David Laird was on the telephone, and would like Mr. Ward to take dinner with him that night.

An hour later, they were together. The talk was, of course, of war, and Laird came to the point quickly.

"Of course, Nelson, you realize that your country needs you," he said, "and you're ready to go to a training camp or something of the sort?"

"Yes, I'm ready for anything they can use me for."

"Are you ready to forego your own ideas of patriotic service and self-sacrifice, if you can be convinced that you can do more as a civilian expert than as a fighting man?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just this," said Laird. "I want you to work for me. I've been in Washington a great deal lately, and I'm in the government service now. I have a big job to do, and I'm to be allowed to pick my own men. You're the first man I've asked—you're the one I want most." Laird himself was a big man, a man of national reputation, and Nelson knew

that any task undertaken by him would be no child's play. "There will no commissions, no glory, mighty little pay, nothing but hard work and self-sacrifice. I shall—we shall—want your factory and your men as well as yourself. So far as your company is concerned, the pay will be good; you need have no fear for your stockholders, or your mother's or sister's income, but you individually will have to take pot luck, and you know what that means.

"But remember this: The man who knows how to manufacture special machinery, to experiment on designs and with materials, how to find materials, how to organize, can do a whole lot more for his country than Nelson Ward the fighting man. If he thinks he's evading a duty, if he thinks that he isn't offering to make the supreme sacrifice, that in itself, even if it isn't the right point of view, is a sacrifice that he must, or should, make."

They talked together for two hours, and at the end Nelson promised to follow David Laird, and follow him he did.

His work began soon enough, and within a very few days there was nothing in Nelson's life but work, with food eaten quickly and at any hour. Sleep was short and taken half the time on sleeping cars. As the days passed, the first great strain, the nightmares, the everlasting depression passed, and a sort of dogged determination settled on him. Little by little, chaos was conquered, the light began to shine, and results, tangible things that counted in the last analysis, began to show. He lost all sense of his old personality; he seemed to be a new man, a man of another world.

Winter came, the long, cold winter, with its mountains of snow, its tales of death and suffering spread across the first page of every newspaper. The blustery air brought on every gust stories of graft, rumors of inefficiency,

criticisms, hints of favoritism and wire pulling, the ravings of wild men.

But even all that loses its sting, for the mind numbs itself and sets up a defense against it, and each man does his duty, giving all he has to give.

It was a Saturday afternoon, cold and dark. Nelson Ward felt the sting of a sharp snowflake on his cheek as he left his cab at the Union Station. The wind was coming from the north, bringing snow with it, and there was far more than enough snow already.

He went to the ticket office and was told again that the train was sold out, so far as chairs were concerned. He did not hear the porters speak to him, but walked wearily out to the train concourse and found that every train was late. There was a gate open for a train that had been scheduled to leave nearly an hour before. He was dead tired, and the thirty-six hours ahead in which he could relax and perhaps sleep were very welcome.

Nine months had changed him subtly, but surely. Perhaps the casual observer would not have noticed it, but those who knew him well and thought about it would surely have seen the set expression of his face, the immobility of his lips, the very slight drawing in of the cheeks, and the sign of steadfast purpose in the softened eyes. But his health had not failed; his body was as straight and erect as ever, for all his fatigue.

Nelson boarded the train, found men standing in the smoking car, and walked back till he saw Natalie Weeks looking up at him. She was smiling, and she was alone in the seat. Nelson thought that she looked frightened, an idea that he knew immediately must be nonsense. But her face did seem to show a little sadness, and the lure of her eyes and the leer at the world that had been in them was gone.

She moved ever so slightly, a clear

indication that she wanted him to sit with her. He put his grip in the rack overhead, and her hand slipped into his for an instant, a quiet greeting.

"Well, old friend," she said, "are you glad to see me again?"

"Very glad indeed. Are you well?"

"Yes, very well, but very tired, at the moment."

"Which means that you are—are playing the big game?"

"But such a very small, insignificant part in it."

"There is no such thing—for you, I know."

There, in the dingy car, he had come face to face with a revelation. The mask had been stripped off and he was looking straight at the woman who before had hidden behind it.

They talked, unemotionally and not of themselves, as the train plowed on slowly through the storm. It was hours late, for it did not reach Alden till eight o'clock, and it looked for a time as if it might be snowbound.

Then it was announced that it would go no farther, and that there would be no trains to New York that night.

"You must come home with me," she told him. "A hotel is no place for you to-night."

He was about to protest, but she stopped him.

"For me, please. There is plenty of room and plenty to eat—there always is."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sure. Come."

They drove to her house and found that her father and mother were at the theater. They dined and went to the room in which he had been with her a year before.

With her? Yes, of course it was the same woman, the same woman with the same eyes—large brown eyes, with lids that fell over them and half hid them, eyes that had cried for love and kisses, eyes that could talk and

beckon, eyes that told of a melting heart, of guile, of selfishness and worldliness.

He watched her, fascinated, hour after hour—the beauty of her, the sweetness of her, the modesty of her, the calmness, the dignity, the quiet of her, and the light that shone from the eyes of her.

A miracle past all understanding had come about. They stood before the fire, she with a coffee cup in her hand, empty. He reached for it, and she looked up to him towering above her. His fingers and hers held the saucer, and the cup slid from it and fell unharmed and unheeded on the thick rug. The small silver spoon followed it, unnoticed.

There was no need for him to tell her that he had seen the wonderful change that had come over her since they had stood there before.

"What does it mean, Natalie?" he asked, his voice almost a whisper.

"What does what mean, Nelson?"

"I should—I should have said what did it all mean last year?"

"I wondered if you would ask me that. I was afraid that I should never be able—never want to tell you what it meant."

"And you do want to now?"

She nodded, her eyes looking straight and true, as honest as the day, into his.

"Come, sit down, and I'll tell you, or, better yet, lie down on the couch. I know how tired you are. I'll sit here." She drew a chair close to the couch before he could help her. "Don't go to sleep," she said, "not till I've finished. You thought last year that I didn't know you, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You thought I'd forgotten the afternoon on the piazza—the day you won the tennis tournament?"

"Yes, I thought you'd forgotten that."

"You see, I knew that you were there before I walked up the steps. I'd been watching you all week, and I had really known you a long time, even before then."

"I had never seen you before that moment, I'm sure of that."

"Probably not. I wasn't sure that you remembered me that night here in Alden, but I had been in love with you, oh, for ever so long."

"What do you mean?"

"Of course you know that Mrs. Brewster is my cousin?"

"Yes, I know that."

"And that in her library she has a photograph of you, in a frame on the mantelpiece? I saw it, and I fell in love with you. I knew that if the man himself was what the photograph said he was, I had found the man whom I could love, and I had never seen such a man—a man whom I could love—before. It may have been the chin, which showed that he was a master man, strong, determined, able, courageous; it may have been the mouth, which showed that he was kind and generous; it may have been those, but I don't think so. I think it was the eyes, the eyes in the photograph, for there was honesty and gentleness in them, something that told of a clean mind and a clean heart, and—but what nonsense, Nelson!—I fell in love, like any child with a *matinée* idol or a prince in a book, and then I saw you, winning tennis tournaments."

"And you were disappointed?"

"So disappointed that I could have cried. I think I did cry a little. And I walked straight up to you on the piazza, so that I could show you how little interest a girl could have in you. I hated you. You were flippant, conceited, blasé, pleasure hunting. Your eyes were simply full of desire for flattery; your face, mouth, chin, everything was full of disdain for the rest of the world. You were satisfied, snob-

bish; worldly wise, and so superior. You see, I jumped from one extreme to another. No!" She held up a finger. "Don't speak yet! I knew that I was as foolish then as I had been before—that you were only an ordinary bachelor, with no responsibilities and a lot of talents of one sort or another. I'd seen your kind before, but all during that fall, I went back, slowly, inch by inch, to the man in the photograph."

"Then I saw you in the Windham, and I had a wild idea. I thought I knew you as well as the photograph knew you. Of course, I couldn't make you love me, not that night, but I thought that perhaps I could rouse you, make you want me, make you admire me. I thought that perhaps, if I could make your heart beat faster, make your eyes snap, make you know that I was an attractive woman, I could tell just what sort of man you really were, so that I could laugh at you and at the photograph, or—love you."

Nelson waited for her to continue, but she sat still, smiling at him with her lips, for her eyes were not smiling—nor crying to him—nor telling of wonderful dreams, but were shining clear, like stars on a winter night.

"No wonder I didn't understand!" he said.

"No, it wasn't surprising that you didn't understand. I didn't understand myself, then. I didn't understand till I felt the muscles of your arms holding me, felt the strength of you that could have crushed me, but that was as gentle as a mother's. I didn't understand until I couldn't rouse you, till I knew that I couldn't make your heart beat faster—I, who was doing for you what I had never done for any man before, and will never do again, that way. I knew, after you had left me, that the eyes in the photograph were your real eyes and that those"—her fingers touched his eyelids—"were make-believe, then. That's why, for

ever so long, I've been waiting for you to come back, for I knew—oh, no, Nelson, I didn't know that you would come back, but I've been watching you, hoping that you would. I know all that you've done and are doing—I've asked Mr. Laird—and when I saw you this afternoon, I knew that he and the photograph and I had always been right, and I'm not ashamed to tell you all this, for your eyes can't lie—as mine did once—and I've been looking into your eyes ever since we left Washington. Doesn't it seem centuries ago?"

She had slipped from the chair to the couch beside him. Her lips, which had once been cold and hard, were warm and soft. Her cheeks glowed, and her eyes poured forth pure love

to meet the love that was shining from his.

And so the hours passed, until from somewhere a voice broke the stillness of the room:

"Natalie, my child!"

"Yes, mother."

"Natalie!"

"It's all right, mother dear. I'm really going to be married at last. Everybody's doing it, you know. This is Mr. Nelson Ward."

By this time they were standing, facing Natalie's father and mother.

"Perhaps the war has had something to do with it," the girl said, "but not much, I think. You see, no uniform goes with Nelson, so it couldn't be that."



THE RAINBOW

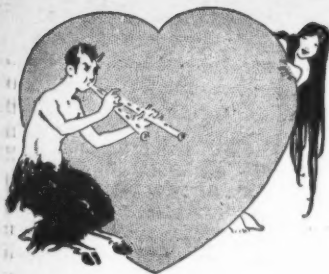
WHEN I beheld the rainbow
 Arched brightly through the sky,
 I saw in it a promise
 That love can never die.

I told my hope to Flora,
 Then, one next summer's day,
 I pointed up to heaven
 And said the same to—May.

Since then I've changed my fancy
 A dozen times or more,
 Yet nothing that can happen
 Could shake my early lore.

I've kissed, I've laughed, I've suffered,
 And none knows more than I
 The rainbow keeps its promise
 That love can never die!

HARRY KEMP.



The Never-Used Room

By Louise Rice

Author of "The Long, Gray Road,"
"Alien Blood," etc.

TWILIGHT. A young moon lying languorously in the wide arch of deep blue that spans the valley. A little breeze riffling the tops of the trees on Rocky Knob. Birds, flying low, on silent wings. Frogs and tree toads and katydids beginning to strum the night songs. Fireflies winking far up the Northern Gorge. Twilight, blue and gray and silver, upon the lonely fields of the valley, upon the hills that ring it round, upon the shimmer of distant creek—early-summer twilight, throbbing with the passion of life.

Joe's little house, set far apart from its few neighbors, as is the way in the valley, sent up a thin lance of smoke against the last deep glow over the Northern Gorge. Summer and winter, Joe could see that smoke as he came from the south pasture with the cows. Walking beside the young bell cow, he kept it in sight until a turn in the road hid it from him.

He did not know that the sight of that smoke was his reward for his long and solitary day. He never said to himself that it thrilled him, each night, as it had the first time, when it had arisen from the hands of his day-old bride. He was an inarticulate man, was Joe, even in his self-communings, but his wife knew that of him which he did not know himself. Within her dark eyes a smile always lurked, and the corners of her full mouth turned softly upward, as if the memory of a kiss lin-

gered there. She was a happy little woman. Sometimes Joe could hear her clear, high voice, away out in the fields, as she sang about her work. Then he would stop his mules and listen gravely. He was not a man to smile overmuch.

His wife sometimes said that she smiled so much because she had to make up for Joe's not doing it, but quiet and grave as he was, his mules nuzzled his shoulder affectionately, and his neighbors looked for his kindness as unquestioningly as they looked for the sun to rise each day.

Joe's wife was noted in the valley as a housekeeper. She swept and dusted and washed and cooked according to the best formulas of household craft, but she found time to hunt for wild flowers, and to observe the beauties of each changing season; and sometimes, even in the midst of her busiest morning, she would stand at her door for half an hour and sing, looking vaguely off toward the Northern Gorge, the entrance to an outer world, as if she would call some message to it.

The content of her heart was deep, for her man walked in health and in modest prosperity and in peace with his neighbors, and between her and him there lay a passionate love, all the stronger, perhaps, because so seldom acknowledged by word or deed. But upstairs there was a little room which Joe had built out over the side porch, one summer, when it had seemed that

it would be needed. The long dream that lay locked up in that little room, which had never been used, was the only sorrow Joe's wife had ever felt. Under everything she did, beneath every cheerful, happy moment, that one sorrow murmured.

All that lovely summer day, drawing toward the twilight which would bring Joe, she had resisted the impulse to go into the little room. She knew that if she did, she would cry, and Joe would know it by her eyes, and that would make him unhappy, too. But at last the impulse had its way. She went in and knelt by the little bed and breathed out the prayer that voiced the only longing of her soul.

Despairingly she had made the same prayer many times before, weeping to think that it would not avail, but that afternoon the bitterness seemed to have left her. She wept a little, pressing her face down into the tiny pillow, but she was singing below her breath as she went to the door to wait for Joe, as she always did.

It was twilight—twilight blue and gray and silver, wrapping the lane in misty shadows.

"Well, I see you got home!" she called her unvarying evening greeting to the dark mass which she knew to be Joe and the cows. And he called back his as invariable reply:

"Uh-huh!"

"What's that along of you?" she queried, shading her eyes against the pale radiance of the moon.

"I dunno," Joe answered, turning the lumbering cattle into the yard. "Him an' his dawg, they's follered me from the south pasture."

"You little boy," she called to the larger shadow hesitating by the well curb, its arm across the lesser one, "what you doin' here? Where's your folks?"

There was no answer, unless a little giggle could be called one. Joe's wife

gave a little stamp and a little sniff, which was a way she had.

"Come into the light," she commanded, "so's I can see whose boy you are. You've got to go home!"

The two moved forward until they stood in the light from the doorway. He was a little fellow, indeed, but he was oddly self-possessed. He had the blackest of eyes, a great mop of tangled curls, and little, pointed ears that made him look elfish. Beside him, his dog, a bushy-tailed, shaggy fellow, with an impudent eye and a lolling tongue, waved a friendly plume. Joe's wife felt the smile in her eyes run down and twitch up the corners of her mouth.

"Who you belong to, honey?" she coaxed. "You're a kinda little fella to be runnin' loose in the valley this time of night."

The boy moved one stiff step toward her, and so did the dog.

"I do not know," he said. There was something very strange about his voice. Joe's wife identified it as "foreign."

"He's from outside somewheres," she said to her husband. It is thus that the valley speaks of all the world beyond the Northern Gorge.

"I reckon so," Joe agreed. "Sorta queer—his comin' so far down the valley."

"Have you lost your folks?" she asked, peering down. "Where you from? That way? From the gorge?"

He stepped nearer to her, looking at her. Boy and dog, they kept their glistening eyes on her. Boy and dog, they touched her hand, a furtive, delicate little caress, given with cold little finger tips and a cold, gentle tongue.

Her heart missed a beat. A shiver ran through her. A sense of something unreal, but as poignant as a haunting, half-remembered dream, came on her. The trees and the lane and the moon swam before her eyes. Joe, who never appeared to see anything, always saw the smallest thing about his wife. Now,

as she put her hand confusedly to her head, he moved quickly and caught her by the shoulder.

"What is it?" he demanded. "You sick?"

She clung to him, leaning against his broad chest, and in a moment she could laugh.

"No, I ain't sick at all. Only I felt kinda queer, all at once. I'm all right now."

"You bin doin' too much to-day?"

"Maybe." She turned in the comforting circle of his arm and looked at the boy. "I—I got kinda upset to-day, and then I—I guess the little fella makes me think of things."

Joe said nothing, but he held her close, and she knew he understood.

"He's a cute little tike, ain't he?" she said, and determinedly took on her usual brisk manner. "Where you s'pose he comes from?"

"I dunno. Might be them gypsies that camped up on the Knob last week left him. He looks like 'em. Anyway, better keep him to-night."

As if he had understood, the boy confidently took a fold of her dress in his brown fingers. Joe's wife laid a kind hand on him, all her tremors gone.

"Go there," she directed, pointing to the side porch. "Go an' wash. Then you can eat. The dawg can stay outside. I ain't never had a dawg in my house."

They watched while he slipped noiselessly around the corner of the house; then they went in themselves.

Joe's wife began to lay another place at the table. Her husband and she were both excited, for so little happens in the valley that this strange little boy's coming among them was a thing of moment.

When she called the boy finally, he came to the door, his hand on his dog's head, and although she beckoned him in and motioned that he should eat, he shook his head.

"What ails you?" the woman demanded. "I ain't goin' to hurt you nor anythin'. Eat! Eat—understand?" and she pointed to the table.

The boy's eyes gleamed at the sight of food, but still he shook his head. Then, with a quizzical, teasing smile, not at all childlike, he turned up his feet to show that they were clean, pointing to the big basin and the soap and towels as confirmation. Then, stooping, he snatched up the dog's feet, one after the other, pointing to them and to the basin.

"Washed!" he concluded, and took a firm hold of the waving collar of the dog's neck.

Joe and his wife burst out laughing. The sound filled all the little house with happy, merry echoes, and the boy, with a confident grin, came in and stood, one brown leg propped against the other, while the dog lolled out a humorous tongue.

"Ain't they cunnin'?" Joe's wife exclaimed. "Here, you little boy, sit down. I'll put some bones for your dawg in the kitchen. Joe, give him his napkin."

But of napkin, fork, or knife the boy would have none. He stared at them curiously when they were put before him, but his brown fingers seemed all that he needed. As daintily as a young bird, he ate the food on his plate, licking his hands clean, afterward, to the astonished contemplation of the man and woman. The coffee he smelled of and rejected, and when Joe lit his pipe, boy and dog went hastily out.

"He ain't any more particular about your old pipe'n I am," she said, but she did not really dislike it. Joe knew that, and so he lay on the sofa and smoked, while his wife cleared the supper things away.

On the porch, the boy lay cuddled up against his dog, whistling something that Joe's wife did not know, but that she liked. She almost danced, in her

prim little way, as she went back and forth.

"You gonna let them two sleep out there?" Joe asked, when she was through and had begun to shut up the house.

"There's the room we ain't never used," she said, after a long pause. "Maybe I'd better put 'em in there."

Joe slid his rough hand around the milkiness of her neck.

"He's a sweet little fella. I reckon you'd better."

Then Joe cupped her face in his big paws and kissed her, deeply and tenderly, before he took his candle and went up to bed.

His wife looked out, meeting four gleaming eyes, which twinkled at her in the moonlight.

"Come in, you two," she commanded. "You can sleep in the house," she told the boy, "an' I reckon your dawg can, too, since you're that fond of him. But, first off, you've got to have a bath."

Back of the kitchen there was a small shed, with a big wooden tub and a barrel of water, and to this place she took the two. The boy, before entering, cautiously inspected it; cautiously sidled up to her when she called; pulled away as she began to undress him; yielded to her coaxing.

It was scarcely what could be called clothes that she took off the child.

"For the land's sake!" she exclaimed, as the bits of cloth fairly fell to pieces in her hands; and then she caught her breath, for she had never seen such a beautiful little child body in her life.

She came suddenly out of her absorption when boy and dog dashed happily into the full tub, with a little giggle and a short, smothered bark of joy and mischief.

"Here, you boy, you take out that dawg!" she cried. "For the land's sake, I ain't goin' to wash no dawg!"

She did, though. When she tried to put him out, he thrust his cold nose

confidingly into her hand and pranced with delight as the boy beat up the water with his feet and giggled.

"Oh, you cute little tikes!" she said, capitulating, and scrubbed them both, with an impartial distribution of soap and towels.

The room that had never been used before had sheets and pillows and blankets for its little bed, and she tucked the boy among them, marveling, for its stab of sorrow came to her. She laid a mat for the dog and laughed as she took away the light.

"I reckon somebody'll come around for 'em to-morrow," she told Joe, lying awake for her coming, as he always did.

But they were gone when she went down to prepare the early breakfast. Only the slightest dent in the pillow assured her that it was not all a dream.

"I reckon he knows where his folks is," she said, as she poured Joe's glass of milk. "Like as not, them gypsies is campin' up in Green's Holler. Anyways, the dawg'll take care of him."

She laughed several times that day, remembering the two impish little pilgrims. She even made up the small bed without remembering that it was the first time it had ever been slept in, and that it was not likely to have an occupant again.

The twilight was blue and gray and silver, and the moon, a little fuller, silvered the lane that night as she went to the door. She was just about to call out her greeting to the shadows moving up the lane when she stopped.

"Well, for the land's sake!" she exclaimed.

"I fell in with 'em in about the same place," Joe replied, waving an explanatory hand at the two little shadows who trotted at his heels. "Won't say where he's bin all day, nor where his folks are."

"You little boy, come here!" Joe's wife called.

Boy and dog, they sidled up to her again with their shy little caress of hand and tongue. And they remained unruffled by question, expostulation, or argument.

"I do not know," the boy repeated and, with the impatient air of one detained from lawful business, retired to the side porch to wash hands and paws. Joe and his wife stared at each other, baffled and amused.

"Maybe them gypsies told him to come here until they got back from some o' their traipsin' around," she said at last. "Anyway, there ain't no harm into him, an' his dawg's real friendly."

So the quaint little pair went to sleep again in the little room that had been so definitely closed that morning, but they were gone when the early morning came. Joe's wife caught her breath with pleasure as she went into the dining room, though, for there was a beautiful moss rosebud, in a nest of wild ferns, on the table.

"He musta bin clear up to Green's Holler," Joe said. "There ain't no roses around here like that, 'cepting them old bushes where the Green house usta be. Wonder how he found them. They's hid clear into the bresh."

Every treasure of the valley he found, it seemed to them, as the weeks went by. Each morning some beautiful or precious thing lay on the table—wonderful green stones from a place far up on Rocky Knob, which the people of the valley called "pretties;" magnolias from a dangerous swamp; pine nuts, which grew up so high on the tree that it is an adventure to get them; wonderful masses of mountain laurel and wild honeysuckle and blue gentians. Joe's wife got so that she ran downstairs each morning like a girl, to see what new surprise would be waiting for her.

What worried Joe was how the boy spent his day. It seemed strange, he said, that you never heard the little fel-

low; you never even heard the dog bark.

"Don't you worry, Joe," his wife said. "Most likely he's usta bein' out that-a-way. Since I give him some o' your baby clothes, he's got enough to cover him, an' I always leave a piece o' bread and meat out for him."

The boy kept his wild, untamed air, and he would talk only so much as would answer the most primitive of human needs. They could not make up their minds whether he knew what they said to him or not, but he seemed to, and so they grew accustomed to him. They were used to finding him gone in the morning, and to his nightly return with the herd. Sometimes, waiting at the south pasture for him, Joe would see the bell cow suddenly twitch an ear, and would look down to find the boy and the dog standing there, having come without a sound.

Life ran along sweetly that summer for Joe and his wife and the boy. On Sunday they drove to church, on the other side of Green's Hollow. The boy would be gone, as always, long before they were up, but once or twice, as they came jogging slowly back in the heat of the day, half asleep with the unaccustomed rest, they thought they saw him peeping saucily at them from behind a tree.

No one came to visit them, for it was a season of bountiful harvests, and even the women and the children turned into the fields to work. Joe would not let his wife do that. More and more, as the summer passed, he began to unfold his heart to her. He kissed her oftener, and sometimes he snatched her up into his strong arms and held her tight.

Sometimes, in the blaze of the big August moon, she and Joe and the boy and the dog would sit out of doors and sing. The boy could not pronounce the words of "Seeing Nellie Home" and "Old Black Joe" and "Juanita," but he piped out a queer, high accompaniment

that rang as true and as resonant as a violin.

They were so used to the boy that they accepted him as part of their daily lives, but for some reason or other, Joe did not speak of him to the occasional man he met upon the roads. And when Joe's wife lingered to chat with her neighbor women after church, she did not tell them anything about her little visitor.

For one thing, strangers were not especially welcomed by the valley, and for another, the gypsies who trailed through there twice a year were always at feud with the valley people; so Joe and his wife agreed that it was just as well not to mention the child. When winter came, of course, it would have to be done, but for the present it was not necessary.

"I'll tell you a kinda funny thing about the little fella," Joe said one morning in September, as he was leaving the house. "An' that is, we ain't never had a real good look at him by daylight."

His wife stared at him and changed color, for she suddenly felt cold.

"For the land's sake, Joe!" she exclaimed.

"Why, honey," he protested, "I didn't mean to scare you that-a-way. I didn't mean nothin' scary."

"Course not," she agreed, "but some way I felt— I don't know what's come to me lately. I'm so jumpy."

"You workin' too hard?"

"I dunno. Maybe."

"Tell you what, honey. To-morrow we'll take a day an' go over to the Corners. It'll perk you up."

All morning she was happy, thinking of the trip. At Hark's Corners she could buy some things she needed, and there would be a lot of old friends to visit. She felt excited, wondering whether her dress was in good condition, and whether she should not buy a new hat.

But at noon her spirits fell. She was "jumpy" again. Fear, unreasoning and inexplicable, took hold of her, so that she was afraid of the shadows of her own darkened house and fled into the hot sunlight in the orchard.

It was almost twilight before she suddenly understood. She remembered another time when strange emotions had possessed her, and when Joe came, she did not call out, but ran down the lane and threw herself into his arms.

Joe could see her eyes shining. He stopped, very still, and let the cows go by as they would. Then he kissed her, long and long.

"Yes?" he questioned the little ear beneath the heavy folds of hair, and for answer she clung closer to him, and he could feel the fluttering of her heart.

They did not think to look for the boy. They went and sat together on the doorstep. After a while, Joe carried his little wife upstairs. Then he made up a picnic supper and took it up to her, and their laughter and happy talk told how they were moved, those two who were generally so silent.

In the morning, they remembered the boy.

"I s'pose them gypsies must 'a' come for him at last," Joe said. "'Bout time fer 'em. Reckon you're goin' to miss him?"

"I'll miss him right smart," she said, but her eyes were far away, and Joe understood. A strange little boy could not mean much to his wife now.

They had so much to think of that they seldom spoke of him again. The winter came on, and Joe sent for his aunt to come and stay with them, and there was sewing to be done. Neighbors made a point of driving through the wet, soggy roads, once in so often, to see that all was well, and the boy and his dog seemed no more than a fleeting summer breath.

Spring came, and early summer, and Joe's son was born.

"I dunno where he gets them catty-cornered eyes," Joe's aunt mused.

Joe and his wife said to each other, privately, that the child was "marked" by the little boy. And as he grew, his mother often looked at him with a sort of surprised attention, suddenly carried back to the summer before he was born by some arresting trick of eyes or smile.

He was a silent child, slow to talk, never quick at anything, and indifferent to learning. But he was fearless and self-reliant and more at home in the woods than anywhere else.

He was a big boy, almost fourteen, before the valley suddenly awoke to discover that Joe's boy, of whom no one had ever taken much account, could sing like a bird. Soon he sang for weddings and funerals and in the church choir, and all his silence and slow-wittedness were counted as nothing against his great gift.

Even from that shut-in place, rumors began to seep out of a boy whose voice was a golden marvel. When he was sixteen, a man came to the valley, the like of whom it had never seen before. He wore a diamond on his finger that made eyes blink, and he traveled in a vehicle which went by its own power, with much noise and at a most dangerous speed, and he spread so much money out on Joe's table that it did not seem real. He wanted a promise that he should have the boy in a few months, and he promised such things as to the boy's future that Joe was totally deprived of speech and went around for weeks in a stricken condition.

They knew so little of the fortune that was coming to them that when another stranger came to the valley, soon afterward, they gladly agreed to take him as a boarder. Joe's wife made the charge as low as she could, for the man said he made his living by writing stories, and she knew that he must be very poor.

He told her, frankly, that he had

come to the valley because he had heard of its beauty from the man who was to train her boy for his career. And just then, far down the road, a mellow, high, sweet voice began singing.

"That's him now," Joe's wife said. "He's a pretty good singer."

The man held up a hand for her to be quiet. He had known that old Isaacstein must have made a wonderful find, but he was not prepared for anything so perfect.

"Why, the thing's unbelievable!" he cried, as the song ended in a tenuous silver thread of sound. "It's perfect technique, as well as a gem of a voice. Has he had no training at all? No? No music teacher who has helped him a little?"

The prim little woman hesitated.

"He never had no teaching," she said. "But—I'll tell you somethin' I ain't never told a soul," she suddenly burst out. "My boy is marked with a strange little fella that come and lived with us, summer before he was born. That little fella could sing grand. And my boy looks jes' like him. Him and a dawg he had, they was with us quite a spell and so—that's how it happened. It was right funny, too, the way he come an' all." And drawn by the intent gaze of the stranger, she went on to tell the story of that quiet summer so many years before.

While she talked, the boy came silently in and stood by the door. He was beautiful in a way that few children are—darkly glowing, like the deep-red moss roses which the strange child had brought as a gift to the mother. His mother stopped at once, and went into the kitchen, sending back a quick look, which asked that a confidence should be kept.

When she came back in a few minutes, she found her guest standing exactly as she had left him. The boy had gone out to the side porch and was washing there.

"You're Hungarian, aren't you?" he asked her.

"Me? No, sir! I'm an Amurican."

"I know—but weren't some of your people Hungarians?"

"Oh, yes, 'way back somewheres. My granny, she come from outside the valley. I never did rightly know 'bout her folks, but some of 'em was Hungarians, I've heard her say."

"Did she ever tell you any of their legends? Stories, fairy tales, you know," he added, in answer to her blank look.

"No, I can't say as I remember anythin' like that," she replied with a polite show of interest, but her attention very evidently bent kitchenward.

"Didn't she ever tell you this one?" he persisted. "How, in Hungary, a woman who wants a child very much arranges a little room for the wood elf and his dog? It must be a room that has never been slept in, and she must wait for the wood elf before her house, when the moon is at the half. If he comes, she must take him in, and he will stay with her until her wish comes true. And then he goes. Children born by favor of the wood elf are singers, always."

She was so white that he moved a step toward her, but in the same moment she laughed and the color came back to her face.

"My, you almost scairt me!" she exclaimed. "Some way, that that you was sayin' sounded creepy. But this that I was tellin' you about was jes' a little gypsy boy. My boy gets his singin' from me, I reckon. I was always sing-

in' when I was young. Only thing is, jes's I was tellin' you, I marked him. That's the reason he looks like him."

Her guest did not reply, and with a whisk of her clean, starched skirts, she was gone, to attend the meal for her family.

The man shook himself out of his abstraction. He was amused, a little, at the superstitious thrill that had shivered through him. And then it came back a hundredfold. The boy singer, with a graceful, gliding step that made him as unhuman as a phantom, came through the room. His black curls were tumbled, and his little pointed ears, in the shadow, and his black, mysterious eyes and his scarlet bow of a mouth and the inscrutable look that he turned on the stranger as he slipped away without a sound— The man found himself outside the house, with shortened breath. And then he laughed.

"Look what comes of too much folklore and too secluded a life!" he told himself. "And yet—"

Joe had brought in the herd. The man went over to the old bell cow, she who had been young that summer years ago, and put his arm around her and spoke into her twitching ear.

"They say Pan is dead," he murmured. "What say you, O you kine? It was with you that he loved to play in the old days. Are you the only ones who can see him now? Perhaps—"

He glanced hastily down. The twilight, blue and silver and gray, lay in soft billows around him, but it seemed as if he saw two little shadows flitting by.

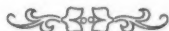




SALLY

By Lucy Stone Terrill

Author of "Glow of Gold,"
"Broadmindedness," etc.



IT was part of Sally Winter's philosophy to ignore the unavoidably disagreeable, so she had not once mentioned Mrs. Newland, though she had allowed herself to go so far as to regret her existence. It was Ned Newland himself who dragged the little lady into the top angle of the eternal. He reached for Mrs. Winter's cigarette, carefully removed the ash into the tray on his chair arm, and remarked casually:

"Well, the devil's to pay now."

"Yes? Then it's bankruptcy for Neddie, isn't it?"

"I'm not so sure. It depends on what *you're* good for. We're running a joint account, you know."

Newland was forty-eight, handsome, cynical, and empty of flattery, and clever enough to know that in this last attribute rested much of Sally's interest in him.

"Oh-ho!" She raised her head interestedly, faintly surprised, tossed her cigarette into the grate, and leaned forward in her chair to pat his hand softly. "So it's a domestic devil that's to pay, is it?" she comforted. "I'm awfully sorry. Suppose you tell me a little about your wife. I'd really like to know about her."

"Elsa Danleigh knows her."

"Well, my dear Ned," she reproved

him, "I don't discuss your wife with Elsa."

"No? Perhaps you will, later. There's no great mystery attached. Jane is one of your ambitious women. She paints. Oh, my God, *how* she paints!"

"Pictures?"

"No—things. Little buttercups and a dog, a naked girl and a wastebasket—only you don't know which is the girl and which the wastebasket until she tells you."

"Oh—an impressionist."

"She is. And an impression of a few of the people who clutter up my house would be about all you could stand."

"It's *her* house, isn't it?" suggested Sally Winter, smiling.

"It is," he replied, no wise disconcerted, "but she expects me to live in it, doesn't she?"

Sally laughed.

"I understand so. What's the matter with her friends? I thought they were highbrow to distraction."

"'Distraction' is good. I never go into the house but she's picked up some new lost dog to pet and feed."

"Oh, *there's* the trouble," divined Sally. "The newest lost dog has a way with him, eh?"

Newland tossed the suggestion aside with a shrug.

"My dear woman, would such were the case. But the creature before you is an ideally loved husband—has *been* ideally loved for twenty years, will be ideally loved to the grave. The thing is this: Jane has got wind of you some way or another and——"

"Our sweet and platonic friendship must cease," finished Sally with a short laugh, mockingly tragic. "Oh, Ned, is this the end?"

"Not at all; only the beginning of the end. Jane is coming out to the club with me Friday. She wants to meet you."

Sally regarded him curiously, her lazy brown eyes half closed.

"Why, I'll *like* meeting her, Ned. Why so morose? Does she greet your friends with a pistol?"

"Not Jane—roses and incense and love lights burning. No use. Optimism hasn't a show with this ideal love. I know the rules."

"Maybe you do," admitted the woman a little wistfully. "There wasn't much idealism in the way I was loved. If there had been, I can promise you I wouldn't be wasting my time the way I am now."

Newland reddened a little and straightened in his chair.

"I can stop the waste any time you say. I came out to golf and not to sit moralizing."

"Trot along any time you like. But you know you're contemptible, so why d'you mind my telling you so? I'm *really* fond of you. Lots of your friends aren't. You can't afford to quarrel with me. I'm interested about meeting your wife. Why don't you want me to?"

"Oh—the devil!" His gesture brought a slight flush to her charming, whimsical face.

"Oh, don't drag in the 'fitness of things'!" she adjured him. "If it made a hit with you, you wouldn't be here.

Don't be such an oyster. Tell me about her."

"You don't go into details about your husband, do you?" he answered nastily.

The light fled from her face, leaving it suddenly older and uncovering an ugly knowledge in her eyes.

"Oh, I say," he said awkwardly, "forgive that, Sally. I—I beg your pardon."

Unfeigned tenderness, rarely shown, leaped into his keen eyes, and he leaned forward and took her hands. Her lips trembled a little, but she spoke coolly and without emotion, ignoring his apology.

"If there's any reason why I shouldn't detest you, I'm sure I don't know what it is. Go on and work off your rotten mood on a golf ball."

"But you *don't* detest me, do you, Sally?" His drawing words were very sure of their answer.

She laughed a little.

"Not yet," she said.

After he had gone, she sat musing for half an hour, and then telephoned Elsa Danleigh.

When that breezy young matron stopped in on her way home after eighteen holes, she found Sally sitting just as Ned Newland had left her. The maid brought them tea, and then Sally said simply, her cheeks frankly flushed:

"Elsa, I wish you'd tell me about Ned's wife. I'm meeting her Friday."

Mrs. Danleigh gave her one quick glance from her shrewd, happy eyes.

"Sally, you're keen on old Ned, aren't you?"

"Yes. But *he* doesn't know it. He thinks I am just larking along the—the way he is."

Her friend looked unpleasantly startled, for Sally's words held a depth of meaning wholly unexpected.

"Good heavens, Sally! You don't *love* him?"

Mrs. Winter lit a cigarette and watched the graceful curls of smoke melt into nothing. Glancing up, she laughed nervously at the consternation on her friend's plain, comradely face, and spoke lightly:

"I'm wondering, old dear, just wondering. It'd be funny, wouldn't it, if I could ever love *any one*—again?"

Only Mrs. Danleigh, of her many friends, knew how hard and bitterly the love of her girlhood had fought to live.

"It wouldn't be very funny if you loved *Ned*," Mrs. Danleigh said bluntly. "Why, there's just about as much real worth to him as—as—" She hesitated, lost for a sufficiently shallow simile.

"Don't bother," Sally put in irritably. "I haven't any illusions about him. I'm not exactly the perfect woman myself. Does his wife care anything about him?"

Mrs. Danleigh stared at her.

"*Care* anything about him? My Lord, Sally she *adores* him! She *worships* him! Her life is simply a well-regulated hell, only disturbed when he changes lady friends. Haven't you ever seen her?"

"Not that I remember. I seldom picnic with the intellectuals. What's she like?"

"Oh, a dear, solemn little soul. She used to be sort of pretty. I don't see her very often, but I don't know of any one I think more of. You'll like her no end, Sally, and you don't need to worry about breaking up a happy home. She'll cure you. Give her a week and she'll have you doing your best to reform Ned into the perfect family man. She's got a regular *army* working for her—all recruited from the same ranks. You'll be an officer in no time."

"Not of *such* an army," jeered Sally, warming her tea. "What's the use of

clearing the way to fresh fields for her to conquer?"

"Not any, I suppose. But she's always sure each affair will be his last one." She's a brave little cuss, Sally. She loves him, you know, and she never gives him up."

"I think"—Sally spoke with unnatural quickness, her voice slightly shrill—"I think, Elsa, that if I had never given Harry up—I could have saved him."

"Why, Sally!" Mrs. Danleigh's eyes filled with sudden tears. "No wife on earth could have put up with Harry. You—you see"—she endeavored clumsily to return to the Newlands—"you see Ned is a philanderer, but he's decently careful, and he doesn't drink. But I must say Jane's hope of him is a little beyond human understanding."

"She can't get much happiness out of it," reflected Sally dully. "Why doesn't she change tactics? What does she go in for all this highbrow stuff for? Ned loathes it."

"For something to tie to. You'll know when you see her. I think she believes she could hold him if she made a name for herself and got a taste of popularity. Of course he'll always be just what he is—a devilish good-looking clothes rack."

"I wonder, Elsa," suggested Sally a little wearily, "if perhaps *you're* a member of her army—'recruited from the ranks'."

"Perhaps I am," laughed her friend. "But I'll be saluting you yet. Wait and see."

"You'll wait a long time. I prefer diplomacy to open battle. It's safer. But let's drop Ned now for a while. I'm a bit ragged this afternoon anyhow, and I'll devise my system after I've seen the lady."

On Friday afternoon, she met Jane Newland. She had not been so curious about any one in years as when she looked into the valiant depths of Mrs. Newland's questioning blue eyes. Jane

Newland was not a young-looking woman; she had kept close pace with her husband's forty-eight years, and her once golden hair was dusty now with gray.

"But, O kind Heaven—her clothes!" thought the perfectly gowned Sally; for Mrs. Newland's hat and boots and gown presented a chaos of effort to appear unusual and interesting. They were both. Sally had not known that such clothes were possible.

The three of them had tea together on the club veranda.

"I've been so wanting to know you," said Jane Newland simply, and her voice made ample compensation for her unhappily chosen garments. It was a wonderful voice, sweet and deep and somehow splendid, like quiet music of a master. "Ned's always finding the dearest women. He tells me you're a marvel at golf."

"I like it," said Sally stupidly. Her gay, whimsical manner had deserted her, and she felt divested of everything but her clothing. "Don't you play?" she added, searching about dully for words.

"Y-es," said Mrs. Newland, flushing a little, "but I'm pretty bad at it, I'm afraid."

"You *are* that," said her husband, and though she laughed lightly, Sally saw that his manner hurt her, and during their hour's chat, his idle banter held an unpleasant personal sting when he spoke to his wife. She met it quietly, laughing each time just a trifle too merrily. Sally asked her about her painting.

"Mr. Newland tells me that you go in for things worth while," she said prettily.

A little pleased flash of surprise crossed the older woman's face.

"Told her no such thing," said Newland. "Told her exactly what I thought about it."

Again Mrs. Newland laughed too merrily.

"I thought so," she said. "I know this husband of mine pretty well. One doesn't expect much flattery from the modern husband, do you think?"

"Well, not from *him*," parried Sally. "I've never heard such brutal truths about myself from any one on earth. How do you put up with him?"

"Oh, I've been married to him for twenty-two years," said Mrs. Newland, smiling at her husband, who lounged back in his wicker chair, bored and ill at ease. "He's a pretty good husband, after all."

"Soft orchestral accompaniment—sweet family scene!" scoffed Newland. "Nothing I like better than home atmosphere in public. Pour me another cup."

Sally grew uncomfortable. She detested the sensation and seldom permitted it, but in spite of herself, her discomfort deepened. It was a relief when young Newland finished his game and hunted them up, his frank eyes full of speculation as he "sized up" Sally. He was nineteen and home on a vacation from his university. His eyes were those of his mother's, set in a face that remarkably resembled his father's. As he sat down beside his mother at the table, she put out an unconscious hand and laid it over his. Sally saw the boy glance quickly at his father.

"Let mother pet her little man," said Newland sarcastically.

Mrs. Newland withdrew her hand and flushed; but her big son, glancing from his father to Sally with a sort of embarrassed defiance, snatched out awkwardly and took his mother's slender hand between his huge young fists and patted it.

"That's all right, old motherkins," he said, his cheeks very red. "You just pet me all you want to."

Sally knew instinctively that he had

declared himself for his mother, for perhaps the first time in his life. She knew it by the uplifted brows of his father and the surprised tears in his mother's eyes.

She had the three of them for dinner, at her pretty summer cottage where her elderly Aunt Mary was given diplomatic prominence. Before they left, she had completely melted the antagonism in young Newland's eyes, but she steadfastly avoided the scoffing gaze of his father. She did a supreme bit of acting and knew that she was baffling the cautiously careless scrutiny of Mrs. Newland, but she was worn out when they went home.

"Shall I run down Tuesday?" Newland found opportunity to say in a low voice as they were leaving.

She nodded, coloring like a débutante at seeing the quick pleasure that flooded his eyes.

On Tuesday Sally exerted herself to be charming. She wore a friendly house gown of a delightfully disturbing design that made her seem ten years younger—and she sang.

"Any woman who allows her husband to listen to Sally's songs is openly seeking the quickest way to get rid of him," Elsa Danleigh had once cautioned a bridge table full of pretty women.

And so, on Tuesday, Sally sang—some queer little songs that made one entirely oblivious to the music, but intensely aware of the charm of the singer. And then she mixed him two cocktails before they sat down by a contented little hearth fire to talk. For once, Sally made no attempt to blaze a diverging path from the trails that lead to the inevitable.

"Do you get any especial pleasure, Ned, out of being so nasty to your wife?" she asked bluntly.

He scowled.

"So you had me come down for a

moral lecture, did you? I might have known it. Jane's 'Martyred Mary' campaign always gets results. Damn it, though"—he hesitated, looking away from her and speaking a little awkwardly—"I sort of thought things might be a little deeper *with us*."

Sally allowed her eyes to drop their shield of whimsical derision and to uncover to him a tenderness he had not seen before.

"Yes," she said softly, "perhaps deeper than you know, Neddie dear."

His smoldering gaze leaped suddenly into brightness, but his voice was skeptical:

"What am I in for now?"

"Whatever you like."

"What do you mean?"

"Whatever you like to think I mean."

His eager eyes burned, and he came to her quickly, leaning down over the back of her low chair and holding her shoulders tightly.

"Don't play with me, you little devil! You *know* I'm mad about you."

"It's nothing startling for you to be mad about women, is it?"

His manner softened abruptly.

"I never found one like *you* before," he said boyishly.

Tears came into her eyes, and though she attempted to speak lightly, her voice trembled.

"You old wretch, I don't want to care about you—but I do."

Leaning her head far back, she let his lips touch hers and follow down to her soft white throat.

And he missed his train—and a second one.

While they were waiting for the third one, he asked lazily:

"Will you do nine holes with me if I come down late Thursday evening?"

"Surely. Bring Mrs. Newland with you."

"What?"

"I said to bring your wife." In spite

of herself, she smiled a little at his irritated stupefaction.

"I will not!"

"All right. Then don't count on me."

"Say, Sally, what's up? I've felt all evening that I was about to be pushed off the rock. Now give it to me straight. What's your game?"

She got up and played with some magazines on the table while she answered.

"Just this, Ned. I've thought it all out. We haven't any morals to speak of, you and I, so we might just as well play round together as be turned loose on other people who deserve better luck. But there's no use talking, Ned. I can't do it, and keep thinking of that look in your wife's eyes. I went through it all once, and it's hell. I know. And I can't do it to another woman. That's all there is to it."

He started to speak, but closed his lips. Sally Winter's life with her husband had been so wretched a thing that her friends seldom mentioned it even among themselves. He relighted his cigarette and waited, carefully avoiding her eyes.

She was silent a moment, and then gave a short, shrill laugh.

"If you'd only act like a human being instead of a nutshell, it—would be easier to explain what I mean."

"What do you want me to do? Keep saying, 'Yes, yes, go on?'"

"Oh, sort of thaw out—say what you actually think—act as if—as though——"

While she hesitated, he picked himself leisurely from the lounge, came over to her, and took her up in his arms, carrying her back beside him as easily as he would have carried a child.

"I'm wild about you, Sally, and you know it—worse luck. What more do you want?"

"To believe it. Listen. If your wife continues thinking that we're playing

round together, you know what will happen, don't you?"

He laughed unwillingly at her piquant, half-serious, half-quizzical face, but he made no pretense at misunderstanding her.

"If you're half so good a fellow as I think you are, nothing will happen."

"You *really* care about me?" she persisted.

"You know it, Sally," he said slowly, and again she flushed with pleasure at the sincere tenderness in his voice.

"If your wife were happy," she said cautiously, like a youngster repeating a carefully formulated answer, "she—she wouldn't be suspicious of us, and if you would take her out oftener, and not snap her head off every time you speak to her, and—and, well, make her believe you were crazy about her again, then we—that is we could still see each other quietly sometimes."

"Well—*go-od L-ord!* Of all the little pacifists!"

She colored furiously.

"I *mean* it, Ned. It's the only way—possible."

"For what?"

"For us."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I'll never see you again on earth unless you make it up to her *some way*. It may be a pretty rotten way, but she'll be happier. It hasn't given her any happiness in the past to uproot all your affairs, but if you'd only put up half a bluff, she'd be satisfied. The question is—will you do it?"

He was embarrassed before the direct question, but her face was deliciously charming, upturned to his.

"You're worth the devil of a bluff," he admitted.

"Then you'll begin by bringing her down Thursday?"

"If it means Friday in heaven."

"It does," she laughed, "if you're the 'ideal husband' Thursday."

And, having missed the third train, he hurried to catch the last one.

Thus it was that Mrs. Newland's life flowed into smoother seas, and the depths of her eyes emptied of their sadness. Her husband, under the stern eyes of the watchful Sally, taught her to golf as well as Sally herself. Once, overhearing him make a nasty remark to his wife that brought the tears to her eyes, Sally refused to see him for two weeks. But she was very kind when, at the end of that time, she forgave him.

People began remarking about the Newlands—and marveling. Perhaps the most puzzled of their friends was Elsa Danleigh, who alone knew that Sally saw Ned Newland frequently.

"Why shouldn't I see him?" Sally demanded, when questioned. "What good did it do for you to renounce him? Why, she looks like the daughter of the woman she was three months ago. What if she is deceived? She's getting more out of life than she has in years. If you were half the friend to her that you think you are, you'd drag her into a good shop or two and inveigle her into buying some human-looking clothes."

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"Because I've done *enough* charity work for the lady. She bores me to death, anyhow. I've never even heard of most of the things she talks about. I don't know half the time whether we're discussing characters in ancient history or some new development of the sex question."

"I *know* you have something up your sleeve," deliberated Elsa, but her thorough investigations failed to discover what it was.

Sally went to the Newlands' anniversary dinner—the first one they had had in fifteen years—and found the house a riot of daffodils.

"Ned sent out wagonloads of them," Elsa Danleigh whispered to her.

"You've certainly got him trained. How did you know what to tell him to send?"

"I didn't know—and I didn't tell him," said Sally, with a tight little line about her pretty mouth.

As the days whisked by, they seemed to melt years from off Mrs. Newland's shoulders. She forgot that she was an impressionist, and gave her paint brushes to the second maid. The somber depths of her eyes filled up with laughter. Her dinner parties took on the jollity of college picnics, and a half-dozen society cubs fell in love with her.

"Holy crackers!" marveled her young son one morning, as she joined him and his father and Sally for an early golf game, looking like an apple blossom in a green sport suit whose purchase Elsa Danleigh had superintended. "Are you my aged father's wife or my kid sister?"

"Let's race down the drive," suggested Sally.

And Ned Newland came in last.

"You poor old horse!" pitied Sally, with a touch of malice.

"Well, Jane beat you twenty feet," returned Newland.

And for no apparent reason, Sally laughed herself almost into hysterics.

A few months later, Elsa Danleigh dropped in for tea with Sally, and said with an irritating satisfaction:

"Hasn't Jane Newland improved wonderfully?"

"She has," agreed Sally.

"Not seeing much of Ned lately, are you?"

"Never see him," said Sally, very busy with her knitting, "and don't want to. Nothing drives me nearer to suicide than a man who prattles about his wife every other breath."

Elsa considered this remark in silence for some time, but her friend's charming little face resembled that of

the Sphinx—as regarded confidences concerning the Newlands.

"You know, Sally, I was really afraid you were in love with Ned."

"Were you?" Sally knitted faster, and something in her downcast face brought a deep tenderness into her friend's voice.

"You're the best little brick I ever knew, Sally, and I salute you, just as I said I should," declared Elsa Danleigh warmly. "But how on earth did you do it?"

"Diplomacy, my dear—versus the army and idealism," said Sally Winter, philosopher.



FAIRINGS

LITTLE Love brought fairings,
Ribbons of the moon,
Silver bells in tinkly chime,
Silken sandal shoon,
Cobweb laces faëry fine,
Attars of the isles,
Wispy tissues, airy light,
Wove of morning smiles.

*Warily I put them by, coyly drooped my head.
When it lifted—woe is me!—little Love had fled.*

Little Love brought fairings,
Magic flowers of flame,
Apples wrought of beaten gold,
Gems that none may name,
Orient pearls of moonlit glow,
Silks of Samarkand.
Pity 'twas to see them slip
Through my open hand.

*Yet—I dared not meet his eye, full of silken guile.
All too well I knew the gulf 'twixt his tear and smile.*

Sturdy Love brought fairings,
Sheaves of yellow wheat,
Velvet fields of mowing grass,
Apples red and sweet,
Strength and work and house and home,
Warm with hearthside fire.
Then—ah, then—I smiled at him.
I knew my heart's desire.

*Now happily by open door I sing all the day,
But all the night, I bar it fast lest my love stray.*

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Peggy Shippen:

"The Cleopatra of the Revolution"

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

THOUGH of the worst sex, she is a fine baby and entirely welcome," wrote Edward Shippen on the day of his daughter's birth.

Margaret, or Peggy as she was always called, opened her blue eyes to the world in Philadelphia on the eleventh of June, 1750. Little Aaron Burr, a handsome baby of four years, was a guest in the Shippens' home on the all-eventful day, and after repeated pleadings, was allowed to stand on tiptoe and look over the side of the cradle where lay the future super-woman.

If the ceiling had fallen on both of them at that moment, America would have been spared much. No such luck. They both lived to do incomparable damage to their native land, and doubtless would have worked more havoc had they been given time.

Peggy was reared in a hotbed of Tories. She came of Quaker stock. Though her father was an American and married to the daughter of the attorney general of Pennsylvania, the Shippens were an old Yorkshire "county family," and most of his relatives lived in England. Ten years before Peggy was born, Edward Shippen,

after completing his law studies in London, came back to America and began to practice law. He rose rapidly, and at the time of the Revolution, he was vice judge of the admiralty court.

Peggy's childhood was like that of most girls of the period. Her education was framed on classic lines. She was also thoroughly trained in the airs and graces of the drawing-room, and last, but not least, was given a knowledge of household duties—especially cooking—that would cause even the modern domestic-science graduate to open her eyes. Peggy had a clear, incisive mind and a genius for analysis that delighted her father. She became his secretary, and thereby imbibed his royalist ideas. For Shippen was a royalist to the core, so much so that Philadelphia's "council of safety" not only put him on the suspected list, but interned him and had him watched.

At the outbreak of the Revolution, George Washington visited Mr. Shippen and was much impressed by lovely Peggy. She was of the pure blond type, with an aureole of ash-gold hair and big blue eyes. The latter she was wont to use with disastrous effect on all who fell under her spell. Washington, by his own confession, "had an eye for a fine woman," and he made no secret of his belief that Peggy was an exceptionally fine woman.

Peggy's first official suitor was a neighbor—Edward Burd. It was hardly more than a boy-and-girl affair, for Peggy was after bigger game. She soon tired of it and handed over the adoring swain bodily to her sister Elizabeth.

General Howe and his British force were quartered in Philadelphia. The leading figure on the general's staff was his aid-de-camp, Major André. Dazzling, handsome, half French, half English, wonderfully magnetic in a buoyant, devil-may-care way, and withal a splendid soldier, André was just the type to attract Peggy, now become the reigning belle and toast of Philadelphia.

She was gay, frivolous, frightfully extravagant, selfish, and cold as ice. The Shippen house became the kingpin in a game of frivolity and pleasure-seeking such as the Quaker town had never witnessed before. Peggy's father was hard put to it to keep pace with his daughter's reckless expenditures. There were concerts, balls, receptions. And in the midst of the whirl were Peggy and André:

Before I go any further, let me say that Peggy Shippen broke the rule governing most super-women of history. From first to last, there was never a proven slur on her morals. Indeed, the only open hint of the sort came from her own nephew, as we shall see later on. In short, out of the many virtues in the calendar, Peggy undoubtedly possessed the one from which all take their name. But I do not think you will find her less interesting on this account. Commandment smashing is not the only—or the most dramatic—attribute of a super-woman.

It is a ticklish thing to tell frankly the story of any American woman. In the pages that follow, I shall make no assertions as to Peggy that have not appeared in open print and that, presumably, have never met with official

denial. If any of these statements are not true, the fault is with the historians and not with me.

André was not only a heartbreaker, but he was, professionally, heartbroken. Back in England, a girl with the poetical name of Sneyd was supposed to be dying from grief because her parents would not let her marry him. And André—Miss Sneyd's miniature always around his neck—was believed to be equally disconsolate. This fact, as you may imagine, did nothing to dim his luster in the eyes of the romantic Philadelphia damsels.

He was three thousand miles away from Miss Sneyd, and he was seldom an arm's length away from Peggy Shippen. He was as penniless as he was charming. He could do nothing to advance Peggy's interest, financially or socially. Therefore, he was no husband for her. But he could do everything to make the Philadelphia season an endless round of jollity for her, so she kept him in stock. It was a dainty, filmy, Greuze-shepherdess, patch-and-powder affair. Indirectly, it was one day to help in fitting a hempen noose around poor André's shapely neck.

There were other suitors and hangers-on, from subaltern to general, from clerk to merchant prince. But for a while André "made the running."

It is not on the free list to be the father of a super-woman—especially if she be respectable. And so old Shippen speedily learned. In a letter to his brother, he loudly bemoaned his daughter's ruinous extravagance, and expressed a fear that he might have to sell everything he had and turn farmer somewhere in the wilds beyond Lancaster.

The British were forced to give up Philadelphia. An American army took possession of the city—an army poorer, grimmer, more in deadly earnest than the redcoats who had brought so much gayety into the sober place. Gone were

the revels of yesteryear. Gone, too, were special privileges and graft and the smug safety of the local Tories.

The Shippens found themselves suspects and were stripped of their glory. This did not suit them at all. Peggy and her father, however, did their modest best to reap a crop in a barren field. Which brings us to Benedict Arnold, and to Peggy's one excuse for immortality.

To make you understand, I must give a brief sketch of Arnold. Please don't skip it, for it not only leads up to a bit of drama worthy of Euripides, but it helps to explain one of the blackest deeds of treachery since the betrayal in the Garden. I shall tell it in as few words as I can.

Arnold was a traitor. No white-washing can cover that truth. No excuse can lighten his crime. But if ever the path from hero to blackguard was greased for a man, it was greased for Arnold.

He was a doctor and apothecary in New Haven, prosperous, respected, happily married. The moment the colonies threw off the British yoke, in 1775, he turned his back on home and profession and marched to Cambridge, with a band of patriots whom he had recruited and trained. It was he who planned the Ticonderoga expedition and who led it. At the eleventh hour, Ethan Allen was put in command of this, and reaped the glory of the campaign which Arnold had made possible.

It was Arnold, a few months later, who, wounded and half starved, saved Montgomery's army from destruction in Canada and brought it safe home. By way of reward, he was tried on charges of "misconduct and dishonesty." A triumphant acquittal was scant compensation for this blow.

By one master stroke of generalship after another, he proved himself by far the greatest leader in the Revolutionary army, with the exception of George

Washington, who was his best-beloved friend. Washington's enemies in Congress—there were plenty of them—wreaked their spite on the chief by ceaseless persecution of Arnold, his friend.

For example, they denied him the credit for his services. They promoted junior officers over his head. They lost no opportunity of heaping undeserved insult upon him. Arnold, bewildered and angry at such injustice, sought to resign from the army. Washington entreated him to remain.

He reluctantly obeyed. His wife—a gentle and lovable woman, whom he had married in early youth—sickened during his absence in the field and died. Congress continued to hammer him. Washington was his only friend.

The climax came at Saratoga, where a battle was fought that decided the future of our country and was the Revolution's turning point. If we had lost the battle of Saratoga, we should probably still be a British province.

General Gates—an incompetent and blustering drunkard—was in charge of the American army there. Arnold was his second in command. Acting, perhaps, through a hint from Congress, Gates relieved Arnold of command—and proceeded to get dead drunk.

While Gates was still drunk in his tent, the battle began. The Americans were soon on the point of collapse. Arnold, who had been ordered by Gates to keep out of the fight, leaped on his horse, rallied the retreating patriots, and—badly wounded—led a wild charge that won the day.

Washington, on the strength of this exploit, persuaded Congress to appoint the wounded hero "military governor" of Philadelphia. There he met Peggy Shippen; which brings us back to our story.

Smarting under his ill-treatment, weary with years in the field, the warrior found strange solace in the flat-

tering attentions of the young beauty. He had never before known any one of her sort. Her super-woman lure gripped him to the very soul.

Peggy was a little dazzled by her new wooer's hero fame, and by his striking good looks. But she was not of the type to be carried away by her heart. Other things being equal, Arnold would not have been likely to succeed where André had failed.

But other things were not equal. Arnold was military governor of the city. He had life-and-death power over her father. On his good will rested the safety of the Shippens. On his good will, too, depended the gayety of the season. Besides all this, there was more—much more—that he could do for any woman who might enslave him, as we shall see.

Peggy took council with her father. Forthwith, the Shippen doors and the Shippen arms were stretched wide to welcome the flattered governor.

And now, for a moment, history becomes lost in the slough of conjecture. More than one historian declares that Peggy and her father deliberately set to work, from the start, to seduce Arnold from his allegiance to America, not only to gratify their own ambitions and their loyalty to England, but through more or less veiled instructions from the British authorities.

Peggy played upon his grievances. She led him into extravagance. She established an influence over him that has made Lanier Dunn brand her as "the Cleopatra of the American Revolution."

Presently Arnold wrote her a letter, which is still extant and which I am going to quote in part. If it were not an ideal proposal, it was at least creditable for a man who understood the sword better than the pen:

DEAREST MADAM: Your charms have lighted a flame in my bosom which can

never be extinguished. Your heavenly image is too deeply impressed ever to be effaced. On you alone my happiness depends. Will you doom me to languish in despair? Do you feel no pity in your gentle bosom for the man who would die to make you happy? Whatever my fate may be, my most ardent wish is for your happiness, and my latest breath will be to implore the blessing of heaven on the idol of my soul.

Sept. 25, 1778.

BENEDICT ARNOLD.

Thus did the Antony of thirty-seven beg eternal damnation from his eighteen-year-old Cleopatra. And she granted him that damnation by accepting his proposal.

Says Saqui Smith:

"The Shippen family swallowed Arnold's lame leg and his three children for the sake of his influence."

A few months later, the marriage was celebrated, but in the interim, Congress took one more fall out of Arnold. Scarcely had his engagement to Peggy been announced when eight charges were brought against him. These charges ran the whole gamut of official misconduct, from dishonesty down.

Arnold was in a white rage. Peggy turned that rage to account. The matter could not have happened more opportunely for her purpose.

A trial cleared Arnold on all counts of the indictment but one—namely, the hideous crime of having used an idle government wagon to carry a load of goods from the stagecoach office to his house. He was proven guilty of this terrible offense against the peace of a government cart. On the strength of it, Congress ordered Washington to bestow upon him a public reprimand.

This, of course, was intended as an affront to Washington, as well as a blow to Arnold. Realizing that, the Father of His Country framed a reprimand that was in reality a glowing eulogy. Read it in Irving's "Life of Washington." It is a masterpiece.

But it served its turn, and it served

Peggy's turn. Arnold wrote to his sweetheart:

"I discover so much baseness and ingratitude among mankind that I should blush at being of the same species were it not for a gentle, generous soul like my own Peggy."

Arnold and Peggy were married on April 13, 1779. The bridegroom's leg, wounded at Saratoga, was causing him agony. The arms of his officers supported him during the ceremony. At the reception, the disabled limb was propped on a camp stool.

Then began a course of riotous living that almost beggared the bridegroom. Peggy kept open house. Arnold paid the bills. The ascetic patriots—especially those whose could not secure invitations there—looked on in open-mouthed horror.

"Mrs. Arnold," says a biographer, "was the best-dressed and best-bejeweled woman in Philadelphia. She made her husband keep an army of servants, six splendid carriages, and a shed of horses. To her home flocked such notables as Washington, Hamilton, Burr, Jay, Greene, the younger Schuylers, and Lafayette—the last named very ardent in his admiration of her."

Altogether, much money was spent, though there was little money to spend. Where did the surplus cash come from? It was certainly supplied, and from some source that can only be guessed at. Records show that, by this time, Arnold had entered into secret communication with Sir Henry Clinton in New York, the go-between being André, with whom Peggy was in steady correspondence.

Arnold had been persuaded, most subtly and cleverly, that America could not win the Revolution; that he would be doing his country a service by turning it over to England upon the generous new terms which the British declared themselves willing to grant the beaten Revolutionists; and that he him-

self would occupy as high and honorable a niche in history as had General Monk, who sold Cromwellian England to the Restoration.

All of which shows what one industrious woman can do to shape a doting husband's mind; also, that a perpetual course of injustice is not the best soil for the nourishing of some men's loyalty. As I have said, there is no excuse for Arnold, but there is much explanation for his treason.

Washington tried to soothe his friend's ruffled self-esteem by making him commander of the fortress at West Point—the key to the Revolution's power. With West Point in the hands of the British, the American cause must fail.

Arnold took command of West Point in August, 1780; but Peggy, ostensibly loath to give up the gayeties of Philadelphia, lingered there for another month before joining her husband. Whether or no her love for frivolity was really what detained her, her continued correspondence with André—stationed in New York—was much less likely to assume a political significance in the eyes of the government if carried on from Philadelphia than from the most important fortress in the country.

At any rate, her arrival at their temporary home near West Point was coincident with the completion of the plot. During the brief time she stayed there—only twelve days—the whole historic drama of betrayal, treason, and death was enacted.

Everything combined to make the situation as tense as possible. In moving-picture parlance, "the camera was speeded up" from every direction. To cap the climax, General Washington, who had arranged a trip to West Point, suddenly changed the date and sent word to Peggy that, with Lafayette, Hamilton, Knox, and McHenry, he would breakfast with her two days earlier than was originally planned.

On the morning of the 25th of September, there was a gay breakfast party at which Peggy presided with her accustomed grace. She laughed and talked and flirted and had never appeared more charming.

With Arnold, however, things did not go so well. At his wife's left, he sat silent and glowering, worried by his secret burden, full of misery.

All at once, rapid hoofbeats were heard. A man jumped off his horse, pulled open the gate, and rushed up to the house. Arnold saw him, and hurried outside, on a pretext. There he was greeted by the news that André had been caught and imprisoned, and that the treasonable papers hidden in his boots had been forwarded to the authorities.

A minute or two later, Peggy received a message from her husband summoning her to her boudoir. With beating heart, but showing nothing of her gripping fear, she excused herself and left the table.

When Arnold panted out the news in a whisper, Peggy swooned. Well she might. The plans for West Point, handed over by Arnold to André for transmission to Sir Henry Clinton, were again in American hands. This meant an end to her husband's General Monk plans, an end to her own Tory dreams of a peerage, an end to André's gallant young life.

It was by the merest luck that the news did not bring her husband, as well as her admirer, to the gallows. The thick-headed officer to whom the captured André had been brought did not guess who had given the Englishman the plans and other papers which he carried between his foot and his stocking. So the captor had sent a report of the arrest to Arnold, thereby giving the archtraitor a chance to escape.

Yes, it is small wonder that Peggy fainted.

Her husband did not stay to help her, but rushed out, jumped on the waiting horse, and rode away to a sheltered cove near by; where, according to prearrangement, his eight-oared galley was waiting for him. He leaped aboard and was rowed out to the British warship, *Vulture*, which had ventured upstream from New York.

Peggy now threw herself, heart and soul, into a fine piece of theatrics. Washington, Lafayette, and Hamilton were all more or less dazzled by her, so they were predisposed in her favor and easily deceived.

Hamilton describes her antics thus:

"Mrs. Arnold remained frantic all day, accusing every one who approached her with an intention to murder her child—an infant in her arms—and exhibiting every other mark of the most genuine and agonizing distress. Exhausted by the fatigue and tumult of her spirits, her frenzy subsided toward evening, and she sank into all the sadness of affection. It was impossible not to have been touched with her situation."

Evidently she worked her superwoman charm for all it was worth.

"I saw an admirable woman, frantic with distress for the loss of a husband she tenderly loved, a traitor to his country and his fame and to his connections. It was the most affecting scene I ever witnessed.

"The general [Washington] went up to see her, and she upbraided him with being in a plot to murder her child. One moment she raved; another, she melted into tears. All the sweetness of beauty, all the loveliness of innocence, all the tenderness of a wife, and all the fondness of a mother showed themselves in her appearance and conduct. We have every reason to believe she was utterly unacquainted with the plan"—clever Peggy!—"and that her first knowledge of it was when Arnold

told her he must banish himself from his country and from her forever."

From this it is easy to see that Peggy had Hamilton and the rest completely "buffaloed." Forgive the slang, please. No other word so well describes her tactics.

Hamilton goes on to describe his efforts to console the pretty wife. All her dread seemed to be that the country would vent its resentment upon her.

The next day, Washington, Lafayette, Hamilton, and others waited upon the bereaved and ill-treated wife, to assure her of their belief in her innocence. She received them in bed. The doting Hamilton further records:

"Her sufferings were so eloquent that I wished myself her brother, to have a right to become her defender."

Washington even went so far as to give her a letter from Arnold, written on board the *Vulture*.

Washington kindly offered her the choice of joining her husband in New York or of going to her father in Philadelphia. Suspecting a possible trap, Peggy shrewdly chose the latter.

On the way to Philadelphia, she stopped at the home of an old royalist friend, Mrs. Prevost. Here she met Aaron Burr, who had been one of her most ardent adorers and was now engaged to be married to Mrs. Prevost.

"On her arrival," writes Parton, "the frantic scenes of West Point were renewed, and continued as long as strangers were present. Mrs. Prevost was known as the widow of a British officer and was connected with the royalists. In her, therefore, Mrs. Arnold could confide. As soon as they were left alone, Mrs. Arnold became quiet and assured Mrs. Prevost that she was heartily sick of the theatrics she had been exhibiting. She stated that she had corresponded with the British commander, that she was disgusted with the American cause, and that through

great persuasion and unceasing perseverance, she had at last brought the general [Arnold] into an arrangement to surrender West Point to the British.

"Mrs. Arnold was unquestionably a gay, accomplished, artful, and extravagant woman. There is no doubt, therefore, that, for the purpose of gratifying an inordinate vanity, she contributed greatly to the utter ruin of her husband and thus doomed to everlasting infamy and disgrace all the fame he had acquired as a gallant soldier at the sacrifice of his blood."

The Shippen family received Peggy with open arms. Not so the State of Pennsylvania. She was so much under suspicion that she was banished and forbidden to return to the State.

She joined her husband in New York and plunged anew into the gayeties offered her. Here she met Lord Cornwallis, and cast her usual super-woman spell over him.

There was much scandal as to the affair.

Peggy was constantly in Cornwallis' company, and he became her devoted slave. In 1781, Arnold sailed for England. Peggy followed at a discreet distance. In London, her friendship with Cornwallis was renewed. One of her grandnephews, Lewis Burd Walker, says:

"To this friendship, her children were largely indebted for their future advancement."

At court, Peggy was called the handsomest woman in England. George IV, then Prince of Wales, headed the train of her admirers.

But in spite of this, life was henceforth Dead Sea fruit to the Arnolds. The world knew them as traitors, and, like Judas, they found the thirty pieces of silver insufficient compensation for what they had lost.

Peggy survived her husband two years. When Arnold was dying, he

asked to be clad in his Continental uniform, together with the epaulettes and sword knots given him by Washington.

"Let me die in my old American uniform, in which I fought my battles!" he begged. "God forgive me for ever putting on another!"

As for Peggy, she had not her husband's comforting remembrance of one great or good deed in which to shroud

herself when her hour of reckoning came. She had played for a stake beside which the political schemes of the Pompadour seem puny. She had failed. And her failure had saved a nation. She had tempted. And her tempting had stricken Arnold from a Hall of Fame niche second only to Washington's to a degradation equaled only by Iscariot's.

Next Month: Betty Linley.



"I AM TOO PROUD"

THE little wars of men
May come and go;
You will not come again
Though roses blow.

You cannot come to me,
Although I wait;
You lie across the sea
In lonely state.

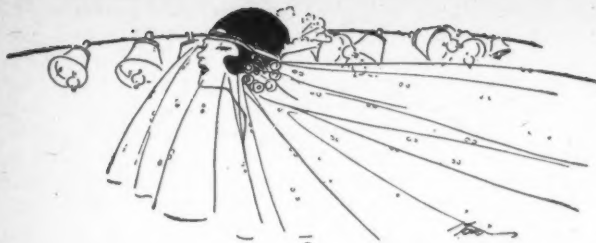
About you they have thrown
Old Glory's folds;
Above you they have sown
Bright marigolds.

Yet some know leaden shame—
Gray grief that kills—
While mine is like a flame
Across the hills!

And some have never known
One joy like this—
A boy's embracing arms,
A boy's wild kiss!

And so I shed no tears!
I am too proud
Of your brief twenty years
And your bright shroud!

ELIZABETH NEWPORT HEPBURN.



Angels

By

May Edginton

Author of "Magic Life,"
"The Woman Who Broke
the Rule," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

MARY ELLIS, who lives with an elderly aunt in a suburb of London, has finished her course in a business college and is about to set out in search of a position in the City. With the self-confidence of a young and beautiful woman, she is looking forward eagerly to making her own way. She is depending, too, for help and guidance upon the advice of a friend of hers—a man whom she has never seen and whose name, even, she does not know, but from whom she receives a letter daily, writing him in return all her most intimate thoughts and feelings. This correspondence came about through Mary's finding of a seal ring about a year earlier. Seeing it advertised under a box-office number, she returned it with a little note, which brought a request for more from the ring's unknown owner, and the resulting interchange of letters, begun as an idle whim, has gradually become the most important thing in Mary's life, leading her to look with indifference upon other men. She does not, however, consciously regard her unknown friend as a lover, as he has told her that there is a reason why it is impossible for them ever to meet. Mary receives a number of replies in answer to her advertisement for work. One of them, from Glen Leslie & Co., Accountants, gives her an unusually early appointment, and she goes there first. As soon as she sees Leslie, she recognizes him as a man whom she has seen several times near her aunt's house. She has noticed him particularly because of his striking appearance and his look of power. Leslie engages her at once as his secretary. She is to share the room of the office manager, Georgine Drummer, a handsome, beautifully dressed woman, whom Mary vaguely feels to be hostile to her. From the gossip of the other girls in the office, Mary learns that Leslie is not happy with his wife, who is carrying on a violent flirtation with another man, Frederic Stacey, and that he and Georgine are on very intimate terms. A few days later, Georgine invites Mary to dinner in her exquisitely appointed little flat, and there she meets Sir James Highlans, a friend of Leslie's whom she has seen several times at the office. Though Mary is too unsophisticated to see it, it is very obvious that Sir James has had something to do with the invitation to dinner. He asks Mary to tea at his rooms the next Sunday, and she promises to think it over. The next morning at the office, before Georgine comes in, she telephones him that she will accept. While she is about it, Leslie comes in.

CHAPTER VI.

BETWEEN man and girl the danger signal flashed like an electric spark. Then it died, and he stood there, as it seemed to her, like a pillar of cloud between her and her desires for life and joy and all things dangerous and new. The hostility in her heart, though rampant, flickered and trembled, afraid. He spoke again.

"You were telephoning just now," he said in, a passionless voice, "to Sir James Highlans."

She struggled with the slight gasp in her breath before she replied:

"I was."

"Why?" said Leslie. "What have you to say to him?"

She did not answer. Her face was the face of a mutineer, but her heart-beats reverberated in all the little pulses in her throat. He spoke again:

"You want to say to me, 'That's not your business!' But I make it my business. Who introduced Highlans to you?"

"Miss Drummer."

"Ah," he said contemptively.

She looked beyond him at her typewriter.

"May I pass, Mr. Leslie?"

"Not until you have answered my question." He let out a sudden gust of fire as if something had tried him too high that morning. "God, do you suppose I'm going to let you——"

"I am going to do it, if I like," she said, fighting her breathlessness from sheer pride.

"Do what?"

"Only go to tea with him on Sunday afternoon."

Leslie stood there, still, brooding. His eyes never left her face.

"I forbid you absolutely."

"Sunday is my own day."

"That is true. Still, I'm going to order this Sunday."

She tightened her mouth, and her eyes burned at him. He put out a hand as if he would have touched her; she drew back, and he drew back, too. And collecting himself into his usual condition of grim frost, he said: "Mind, I utterly forbid your acquaintance with Highlans," and passed back into his room.

Relief was overwhelming. She went and sat down before her typewriter and realized how frightened she had been. She sat idly, for it was early, and her mind automatically began a sort of analysis of men. Steven had made her feel the heat and danger of passion, and she had crushed it back upon him, resentful of its intrusion and scared at its half-hidden vehemence. Highlans had brought with him, respectfully, and in the perfect manner of a master at the art, a laughing, sparkling sense of intrigue, very gay, light, leisurely, and with only a little undercurrent of danger in it—danger under whip and rein—to make it delicious. But Glen Leslie overpowered; his dominance already was almost

terrible. She felt against him that hostility of the young female against the male, which Steven had first roused in her, increased tenfold.

Georgine came in, lithe and slick. She had a white flower in her buttonhole, a beautiful felt hat like a cowboy's, and a colored handkerchief tucked into the breastpocket of her tailored coat. She was a man's woman all over.

"Morning, Miss Ellis." She nodded, and hung up her hat and coat, and went to the mirror with her little powder-puff.

The noise of the girls bustling into the outer room trickled through the closed door.

There were fresh spring flowers on Georgine's desk. She went and touched them, looking from them to Mary and back again, with a hinting smile as of a secret shared.

A man Mary had never seen before entered, after a perfunctory knock on the door with his stick handle. He was tall, rubicund, yet slight, no longer young, with a smile masking him ingenuously, and the wary eye of the rover.

"I've called," he said, after a familiar greeting to Georgine, "for Mrs. Leslie."

As he spoke, the little woman came out of the inner room, her husband framed for a moment behind her in the doorway. He nodded to the newcomer across her head, his glance flashed round the anteroom, and, retreating within, he closed the door again.

Wrapped in fur, wafting violets, Mrs. Leslie stood there, very precious. She drawled:

"Oh, Frederic, you're late."

He asked: "Been bored?"

She nodded, went to the door, came back slowly. Standing by Mary Ellis, she looked her swiftly up and down, put out her hand, and said:

"You're the new secretary?"

Then she turned and looked at Georgine, up and down gayly; while the man called Frederic smiled, and his stick handle tapped reflectively against his mouth as if to check its amusement.

"Let me see," said Mrs. Leslie, "you're Miss Ellis? That's the name. I'm giving a fancy-dress dance next week, on Tuesday. Would you care to come? Miss Drummer will be there."

She looked toward Georgine, who was rearranging her flowers with perfect gravity.

"You would? I'll be delighted. Good-by." And she went out, passing Georgine with a squeeze of malicious friendliness for her arm, followed by the man called Frederic.

Georgine settled to her desk and drew toward her the piled morning mail, to which she attended before it passed into Leslie's hands. But she paused with her finger and thumb breaking open the first envelope flap to remark:

"That was Stacey."

"I've heard of him."

"You would, since you go out to lunch with the crowd."

"They said——"

"The truth, I dare say," said Georgine, "but not the whole truth. They're like kids guessing riddles."

A glint of feminine wisdom kept Mary silent. She took a brush and dusted her machine till the rustle of paper told her that Georgine had turned to business. Then she awaited Leslie's bell in idleness, finding herself full of dreams again.

A fancy-dress dance!

She thought girlishly:

"What'll I wear? It can't be anything expensive. I wonder if auntie'll help me make it, or will she disapprove too much? If she doesn't help me, I'll never get it done, just in the evenings. Shall I be Queen Elizabeth? Or

Night? Or shall I be Greek? Or a nymph, or something like that?"

Her oyster shell was full of pearls. What a glad thing that she had pried it open! She felt dreamily: "I do love the world." She wondered if each day would continue full and bright. There seemed so many people to contribute to the sum of a girl's light happiness.

A fancy-dress dance next Tuesday!

Even as she repeated it to herself ecstatically, she heard the sound she had been waiting for, and with pencil and pad, she slipped quickly into Leslie's room.

Already she knew the hunch of his great shoulders when he wasn't pleased. Now they were hunched, set, and she was the guilty cause. She knew it, and felt very small, very nervous, yet equally obstinate. She sat down and bent her head like a flower before the wind of a coming storm, but resolved to weather it. The storm did not break; it brooded over her, penned in the pillar of dark cloud. It did not pass, but neither did it burst. Only when she had finished taking down his personal letters and was slipping away did he shift slightly in his chair and, looking over his shoulder, say:

"Miss Ellis, I meant what I told you just now. About Highlans."

She came swiftly back to his desk and threw her all into the effort of defying him.

"So did I."

He looked at her without astonishment. She gazed back into his eyes, and saw, encroaching into their cold hardness, a warmth, a fire, a jealousy of possessiveness, before which she wavered and fled. At the door his voice checked her again.

"What are you running away from?" he said.

"I'm not running away from anything," she stammered. "I'm r-r-running to my work."

She slipped out without giving him time to reply, and noted Georgine's eyes lifted watchfully across the top of her desk. They found and fastened on the flame in the girl's cheeks, and turned acid.

"I don't suppose he knew what he was looking like," Mary thought, fixing the sheets of paper in her machine, "I don't suppose Steven knew, either."

She was meeting that devout and faithful servant at midday. He had written her a note of beseeching to which she had yielded. Her yielding was easy, because she had all a woman's cool affection for her conquests. To refuse them—marriage, that dark step into an unknown land from which one never returned, or returned scarred, was not to say that one would refuse to meet them, condole with them over one's hardness of heart, turn the knife softly in the wound instead of plucking it out and letting the wounded bleed till he was cured of his fever. When Mary met Steven at the entrance to their usual lunch shop, she was pitiful, yet intrigued, to see his look of sullen adoration.

He wanted to buy her lunch. She wouldn't let him.

"No," she said, "I'm independent. I'm as independent as you. It's nice."

He was submerged in a sea of depression. His conversation was mostly an erratic bullet hail of questions.

"How's that Leslie behaving? All right? H'm. Why shouldn't he behave all right? Well, you're too pretty to work for a man. I don't like it. I'm horrid? Well, I know the world. You'll know it, too, one day. Ask your aunt. You don't want to listen to your aunt? I know that. You don't like what she's got to say, but it's right, every word of it. Oh, will you prove it wrong? *Will* you? I say, *will* you? No. I'm not going to explain. Not any other fellow? Did you say 'Sir' James Highlans? That's no good to

you. Don't you have anything to do with him. You only want to go to tea with him? Tea! Do you know what tea'll be? I tell you, you don't know men!"

"Most men seem to warn one how awful the other fellow is," she snapped, growing weary.

"And you don't believe it?"

"No."

He learned that, beside the office meeting, she had met Highlans in a friend's flat, had been driven all the way home by him in a taxicab.

"Well, didn't he——" Steven began, but stopped before the fury in her young face.

"He's a gentleman," she said, striving for disdainful coldness.

"We're all the same. All tinder."

"There is such a thing as good manners."

"Good manners won't save you unless combined with good morals."

"I don't know why you should infer Sir James Highlans' morals aren't good."

"These men-about-town——"

"Talk of something else."

He stepped in wheedlingly.

"Yes. Talk of us. Why not?"

"It's no use."

"I'm getting a rise in a month. I heard that this morning. Doesn't that make a sort of difference to you?"

"Difference? What difference?"

"We could—if you'd marry me—we could have help. It would mean a char-woman two or three times a week, and——"

A complete sense of his hopelessness sent her glance down to her hands. They were folded on the table; they were small and white, soft and carefully kept. What was it he would ask them to do?"

"Steven," she said mulishly, "look at my hands."

"Don't ask me to. I want to kiss them."

She snatched them below the table. "Don't talk to me like that! What I mean is, I won't do scrubbing and dusting and washing to spoil them for any one."

"Not if you loved a man?"

"I don't know," she said, with a young girl's callousness. "I can't imagine loving a man better than my own hands."

"You will some day."

"Then I hope he'll be rich. No, I don't. I'd rather make myself rich."

"Rich!" he took her up fretfully. "You've got some large notions somehow. Your home's small—just the kind of little home I could give you. It would be what you're used to. If you don't think my salary enough to start on, I don't know what you do want."

"I don't want to start at all."

This gave him a blank feeling of futility, but he began again:

"If you'd marry me, I could make you happy."

She glanced away from him wanderingly around the overwarm, overfull little restaurant. If only he would cease troubling! And her look fell, all at once, on a familiar figure seated at one of the marble-topped tables. The figure was eying her across a sea of heads. It was the fat Daisy.

She jumped up, with a word to Steven, and went across to the girl.

"Hello!" she said. "You here?"

"I've been watching you and your friend," said Daisy. "He's very struck. Is that the one you lunch with so often? It's nice to be taken out."

"I'm not being taken out. I'm paying for my own lunch."

"Well, I wouldn't," said Daisy, "if I was with a fellow."

"Come over and be introduced."

"I don't want to chip in, I'm sure."

"But I'm just going, and he hasn't finished his coffee, and he'll be lonely."

"Why are you just going when you've got a man to talk to?"

"I've got to get back early," said Mary.

She left Daisy with Steven. She had a glimmer of the fat girl's nature—of her warm, absorbent quality, her inherent domestic longings, her easy sympathy, her weakness for, and unction with, men. Trust her to give Steven the flattery he considered his due! Trust her!

As Mary went out into the street, she snuggled her hands, in their chafed gloves, deeper into her coat pockets. They were soft and white, and had been in danger of becoming servants.

"No!" she said to herself. "Never in danger! I couldn't ever have done it."

Her mind ran for a few moments on Mrs. Leslie, her extraordinary pitch of bodily cultivation and preciousness; but any envy fluttering into the girl's thoughts at the vision of the other woman was ruled out by a cocksure confidence that some day—

Through all her being there surged an unconquerable trust. It was born of the inherent royalty of a very pretty woman with a natural consciousness of her power. But she had not recognized that.

She was willing, in spite of her truly feminine tendency to make serfs of men, to give away Steven to Daisy if he would be given. It was the feeling of a woman with a well-stocked wardrobe saying to a poorer neighbor: "Do take this gown. It doesn't suit me, anyway." As the rich woman may possess herself of gowns galore, so may the alluring woman possess herself of men. The girl's heart was full of this knowledge, uninterpreted.

She walked slowly, for she did not want to get back to work early. That had been a white lie, a little fib. "I can't stay. You talk to him." "This gown doesn't suit me, anyway."

As she paused here and there by a window, her affection was caught before a jeweler's by a chain of pearls, small, graduated, milky white. But the chain did not fret her. She looked at it with a serene, small smile, telling herself:

"Ah—yes—some day."

CHAPTER VII.

She sent her letter out to the unknown that night. It was a very little note, for her head was full of other matters which crowded out anything so ethereal as a shadow:

DEAR BEST FRIEND: I believe life is always like a nursery. You play with your dolls and then you quarrel with nurse because, like all despots, she wants to thwart you to show her power. Who do you think is "nurse?" Mr. Glen Leslie! And a horrid nurse he is, too.

Have even employers any right to rule over one's friendships? No. No. NO!

Besides, you told me he wasn't so—is "impeccable" the right word?—himself. And I think I believe you. When he looked at me this morning, he was angry, but all the same, it was one of those awful "man" looks that I can't stand. As Steven—my first proposal, you know?—looks at me. You understand, I expect.

About Steven, I'm giving him away—to some one whose need's greater than mine. That's cattish. She's very nice. But she's fat, rather, and her legs are like little tree trunks going straight down into her shoes without a curve. I expect you know what I mean?

Throwing him to her will be rather like throwing a boomerang, I expect.

Oh, I'm going to a fancy-dress dance! Mrs. Leslie's giving it. Write and tell me what I shall wear. But write quickly.

Heavens, I'm sleepy! Good night.

MARY.

His reply came; as usual typed neatly—by himself, he was often at pains to tell her—very serious. He asked, apropos of the dance:

"Have you thought of being an angel?"

Mary looked forward to Sunday.

Ebury Street was a new hunting ground to her. On Saturday afternoon, she was laundering a ruffled white blouse and manicuring her nails in a passion of care. She sang in snatches all the time, her voice trilling out through her high bedroom window into the spring air. It was so somnolent in the street, warm and patient with a half-holiday restfulness. Steven waited there. He hung about, smoking cigarettes and thinking:

"She must be coming out for a walk this afternoon. She can't be going to stay in. She must be up there getting ready."

But the small contralto voice, very sweet, warbled on, past two o'clock, past three o'clock.

At last Steven went to the door and tapped with the knocker impatiently. He heard her voice above him, "Sh, Mr. Hands! Auntie's asleep," and, looking up, he saw the girl's black head leaning over the window sill. She put her elbows on the sill and asked him:

"Why are you here?"

"I came to see if I could take you out."

"You can't. I'm far too busy."

"Busy! On Saturday afternoon! What at?"

"Oh, Saturday afternoons, business girls wash their hair and their blouses, and thread all the clean ribbons in wherever they have to be threaded."

Steven was slightly dismayed and prim. But, recovering, he said:

"That's a poor way to spend a half holiday. Come out. Oh, Mary, do come out!"

"Steven, once and for all, I can't. Go and ask Daisy."

"Daisy?"

"Yes, Daisy. Miss Buttons. The girl I introduced you to in the Cabin the other day."

"Oh, her!"

"Why not?"

"No feason at all," said Steven, look-

ing up. "She's a very nice girl, and she knows how to appreciate a fellow."

"And I don't, Steven, I don't. So go away. I'm sorry you've come here for nothing."

"So'm I."

"Then why linger?"

"As for not appreciating, you appreciate other fellows all right. What about this man you're having tea——"

"Be quiet!"

With a slam, she closed her window. When he went away, she did not know, but, looking out cautiously from behind the glass ten minutes later, she saw that he had gone. The tiny front garden with the tufts of violet root was empty.

She thought, polishing a pink nail:

"He'll go to Daisy, and she'll leave anything to be taken out to tea. Perhaps they'll get married some day and live in a little house like this. Oh-h-h! What appalling babies they'll have!"

Auntie was wide awake and suspicious at tea time. She wished to know all that "my niece Mary" had been doing and intended to do. She had had a dream during her nap, she said, in which she had seen Mary walking arm in arm with a gentleman who was not Mr. Hands. "My niece Mary" was crafty and clever in her replies; she evaded all references to the ensuing Sunday afternoon; she waited upon auntie very sweetly; and in the morning, she escorted the old lady to church.

But when she had washed up the crockery from their midday dinner, saving her little hands from the grease and hot water with all possible care, she was bold.

"I'm going out to tea now, auntie," she said.

"Where, love?"

"Into town."

"I hope it's a young lady," said auntie.

"It isn't."

"Is it Mr. Hands?"

"No," Mary declared emphatically.

"Who is it?" said auntie sternly.

"You wouldn't know if I told you."

"Pardon me," said auntie, very stately, "but that is just what I should do."

Mary murmured: "How stupid of me!" She giggled a little at auntie's smartness. Then: "His name is Sir James Highlans," she added.

Contrary to expectations, auntie smiled.

"'Sir' James?" she reflected. "Sir James Highlans?" She settled down to sleep, smiling, but watching "my niece Mary's" exit with a wide-awake eye.

Highlans was ready and waiting for his visitor when she rang his doorbell. A manservant admitted her, taking in with a glance that hardly rested upon her every detail of her appearance. And she appraised each detail of her surroundings. She was in a little hall as narrow as a corridor, carpeted thick, but otherwise bare, save for a long black-oak bench and a few prints on the light walls. There was a very faint smell of very good tobacco. Then, before the servant could usher her through any of the closed doors to right and left of her, one of the doors opened and Sir James stood there, sleek and cheery.

He waved the servant away, saying, "Tea," and, taking the girl's hand, led her into the room. The windows were open; it was bright with spring flowers and warm with a pine-log fire. Great chairs, padded deep, bookcases, a tea tray on a card table gave her an idea of the kind of rooms these men had—men who didn't marry and live in little houses like auntie's. Highlans, still holding her hand as he led her across the room, put her into the biggest chair and stood by her, with that look of sharp, admiring observance.

He said whimsically:

"Miss Adventures takes another new

and perilous step into the wicked world."

"It's a world full of flowers."

"Ah," said Highlans, "that's because you were coming."

"Is it really?"

"Do you want to be flattered, child? It is, *really*."

She sat there, feeling luxurious and showing it without reserve.

"Lovely to live in a room like this," she said with a child's naturalness.

"You think so? But what sort of room do *you* live in?"

She laughed.

"Oh, very different from this."

Highlans could picture to himself easily her little, narrow environment. It would be one of those suburban boxes, all in a row, with a front bow window and a plant in it. There would be cushions that were never used, with flowers hand-painted on them, beastly sticky. He had once seen the inside of the suburban drawing-room on a very small scale, and had never forgotten it. He kept himself from shuddering, and looked bland.

"Here's tea," he murmured.

She poured out, handling antique silver casually. Her casualness struck him a good deal, but then she had struck him a good deal from the first moment of meeting. He had had other girls in those rooms, girls not of his own class, underbred things who hadn't known what to do exactly, their charm—which had made some impression on him in other surroundings—dropping from them in the rarefied presence of things really good and fine and revealing their manifold vulgarities. But the quiet cocksureness of this little girl was a new thing.

"How are you getting on with Leslie?" he asked, and she answered:

"Very well, I hope."

He saw a tiny wave of color mount into her cheek.

"You don't deceive *me*," he said

softly. "What's Leslie doing? What's his little game? How did he get you?"

She looked at him in a slight, puzzled confusion, and he changed his tone instantly.

"I mean, did you get the job through an advertisement or something?"

"Yes. I advertised, and he answered.

But, please, why?"

"I know Leslie."

"He thinks he knows you," she murmured with mischief.

"Oh, come!" said Highlans. "Leslie's one of the best—though I don't know that he's a perfect friend for Miss Adventures. But what has he been saying about me?"

"Nothing."

"He said you weren't to know me?"

She gurgled with laughter.

"And here I am!"

"Yes," said Highlans, smiling back, "here you are. I knew Leslie would tell you that, by the way." He regarded her narrowly; then appeared to give up some question formed in his mind. "But look here, you aren't cut out for a business girl. Why do you do it?"

"I have to do something."

"It's incongruous."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you exactly, on the spur of the moment," he said thoughtfully, "but it's all wrong somewhere. I think—"

He broke off and laid his fingers for a moment over her wrist, watching her face the while.

She remained cool, steady, and careless. She wasn't going to coquet with him. He saw that, even while he could hardly believe it. Those other girls of her class had been so ripe—and over-ripe.

"What's your first name, please?"

"Mary."

"It would be. That's perfect. Well, I can't call you Miss Ellis. I'm

obliged to call you Mary. You do see, don't you, dear child?"

With another of her rich chuckles which caught his attention, she said:

"I'll take your word for it."

"You dear!" said Highlans, transported for a moment to a degree that surprised himself. Then he recaptured his subject and went on: "I think you're an anomaly as a business girl because you're too royal altogether. Your heart isn't in typewriters; it is, although you may be unaware of the fact as yet—I say *as yet*, mind you—bent on the true and only business of woman. You've been brought up on advanced sex-equality college ideas, I dare say. I know you have; you've got the aroma of the lecture room still about you, sweet as you are. You don't mind my saying you're sweet, Mary? But these things are no good to you, my child. You want, I suppose, as all these curious young females do want, to pull level with us and to make your way like a man. But, my dear, you are one of those girls who can make your way, by the wink of an eyelash, *as a woman*. And that's far easier. You can get all your roads made for you and roses growing down every one."

She listened. He had his hand on her wrist again and held it in a caress.

"But——" she began.

"Don't say 'but' yet," he adjured her. "Let me go on. I suppose you get up in the cold early every morning, and go to business, and clack that beastly typewriter all day, and say: 'Yes, Mr. Leslie,' and, 'No, Mr. Leslie,' like a little automaton, when by a look——"

Then he laughed, shifting his tone a little.

"No, but what I mean is, a girl like you who does a job like yours isn't using her true strength. It's not your job, my dear. Well, you say, 'Yes, Mr. Leslie,' and do his letters, and go out—I hope you don't go arm in arm, but

I tell you I've seen 'em doing it—with a crowd of underbred female magpies to a very bad lunch. Child, I hate to think of you doing anything so thoroughly unnatural!"

"What should I do?"

"Your natural wits——" Highlans began.

She interrupted him:

"Yes, but what exactly should I do? And when?"

Highlans thought a bit.

"Why can't women row with the tide?" he murmured. "It's always been best. All this class-room nonsense—oh, if you knew how it wearies men! We curse like thunder!"

"But do you think we mind if we weary you?"

"Now," said Highlans, "don't ever make a remark like that to any intelligent man again."

He thought a bit more.

"You did know it was nonsense to say that, didn't you?" he appealed to her.

She caught his eye and owned, "Yes," blushing.

"You dear!" said Highlans. "How square you are! You're not a humbug. Oh, you're wonderful! Don't you *feel* you're going to shake yourself free of all the kind of thing you've gone out and asked for? Don't you *feel* you're going to win out as a woman?"

"I *know* I'm going to win out," she said, with a hint of triumph in her voice.

He stared.

"You *are* a winner!" he exclaimed.

"But," she repeated, "just *what* should I do?" And, leaning toward him, she looked up glowingly into his face.

Her unconsciousness gave him shame, chagrin, and entertainment.

"She doesn't want me to make love to her," he knew. "But is it possible she can't see I want to do it?"

Deciding that she didn't, yet, he replied:

"Just what should you do? I don't know."

"Nor I," she said, and drooped like a disappointed child.

He said softly:

"Baby, have some more strawberries."

She had taken forced strawberries and cream as casually as she had handled the antique silver.

"No, thank you." She drooped.

"Come!" he exclaimed. "Chocolates, then! Don't be a humbug, after all. You know you're a little pig for sweets, because all nice girls are. It's only those horrid classroom women who count calories and phosphates and things. God, how I hate them!"

When she had emptied a bonbon dish, he got up and went over to a piano, which she had not noticed before, in one corner.

"Come here, Mary," he said. "You sing. I know it."

"Only little things."

"What are little things?"

She mentioned numbers from current revues and musical comedies, which were being sung and whistled all over the city.

"That's what I want," said Highlans, opening the piano. "I'm not asking you to sing 'Carmen' or 'Pagliacci.' Now stand just there, child, and sing 'The Great, Big World Keeps Turning.'"

At first he did not look at her till she had lost herself in the catch-and-go of one of those sentimental numbers that the public loves; and then he only snatched glances at her. She was at ease, putting her heart into it, moving as she had seen the theater favorite who sang it on the stage move. And he tried her with other things; lastly with a naughty little number that had made the success of the latest revue and that Mary rendered with aplomb and devilment.

She was laughing when they finished.

Highlans laughed, too, and his eyes glowed.

"You're good," he said. "I think you'd get over, too. That's the chief thing, you know—to get over the footlights. Some women are as beautiful as Eve, and they never do it."

"Oh, are you thinking——"

"I'm thinking of nothing at all."

"Oh-h-h!"

"Disappointed?"

"Of course there's no reason why you——"

"Should take any interest in you."

Highlans smiled quietly. He went over to the fire, kicked the pine logs, threw on more, and uttered briskly:

"Concert over, and a very nice concert, too."

He handed the girl a cigarette box.

She took a cigarette, and he held the match. They stood on the hearth together for a moment or two, not speaking.

"Sit down, Mary," he said, pulling forward her deep chair again.

She sank into it, her thoughtful gaze on the fire. He saw that he had set her dreaming.

"And then I must go home," she uttered vaguely.

But he kept her thinking and talking, till the servant came in to draw the curtains and switch on several shaded electric lamps.

"Oh!" she said again. "I must go!"

"Must you?" said Highlans, very quietly. "Why shouldn't you stay and dine with me somewhere in town?"

"I couldn't."

"Why not?"

She didn't know.

"If it's auntie," said Highlans, smiling, "we can send her a note by messenger."

But it wasn't auntie. Auntie would merely think she had returned to her suburb and gone to church, instead of going straight home.

"Church!" Highlans murmured.
 "Good Lord!"

What was it, then?

She owned; nothing.

"That settles it," said Highlans, rising. "Please dine with me, my dear. As a charity. I'm at a loose end this evening. And we haven't half finished talking, have we?"

She was conscious that they hadn't.

He rang the bell:

"Taxi," he ordered. "And let your wife show this lady—— You'll want to look into a glass, I suppose, Mary, before dinner."

She found a little dressing room, given up, apparently, entirely to feminine visitors. Hairpins, powder, rouge—they were all there, and wealthy brushes with backs of thick silver. The woman who attended her poured out hot water and dropped into it a few grains that distilled perfume. It mounted through Mary's nostrils to her brain. "Oh, to be rich!" she thought. And she thought, with a vague sense of bewilderment, of Highlans. "You could win out *as a woman*."

Already she felt that it was familiar to her to drive through dusky streets with him in a taxicab. She loved London by night, as all romanticists do. The swift rush toward joy—for wasn't a gay restaurant joy?—the lamps like stars lighting the fairy way; the men and women all moving toward goals, hopes, desires; the stories in pictures painted in every street; the dark sky, with trees in square or park lined darker against it; the rolling murmur of evening life beginning anew after the spent day—with all these her inflamed young imagination rioted and satisfied itself. When Highlans, in the dimness of the cab, reached out and took her hand, she squeezed his gladly in return. For a moment he was startled and leaned toward her sharply, looking at her face, but he missed there

that for which he sought. It was untroubled, unthinking, just rapt in the enchantment of the great town.

"Would it spoil everything," he thought, "if I kissed her now?"

So patient a hunter was he that he could be unhurried. Her limp little fingers in his entertained him by their lack of expression. What a girl! Hardly yet grown-up, in spite of being twenty! And when they arrived at Romano's, he was unruffled, unangered by her entire lack of response, because she was a new thing to him in a world of old things.

They dined in the grillroom. He explained the inimitable place to her. They were both gay. He thought her, with every passing minute, more adorable, and she thought: "Why, he's like a very old friend!"

After, there was the long drive back to her suburb. That exercised him a little, because his mixture of drinks at dinner, if judicious, had been liberal. Yet, when they alighted before the little box in the row of other boxes, he had not kissed her.

CHAPTER VIII.

With the unerring flair of women for situations of doubtful romance, Alma Stone and her small crowd fixed their attention upon Mary. Somehow, mysteriously, they scented Highlans. Somehow, unfounded by any substance of fact, one whisper floated around: "Georgine's cut out." They heard, through Daisy, who was not now inclined to be so fatly kind, of Steven, the pale and sullen lover with his sense of injury marking him deeply. So they put Mary down as a fast cat.

"What she is," said Alma, "is a fast little cat, and I don't care who hears me say so."

Nevertheless, she lowered her voice, because Georgine Drummer had just come into the room with an order.

Georgine heard it, though.

Mary realized it soon after. By Monday afternoon, she could feel the wave of derisive jealousy that rippled through the room if she entered it, and, reaching her own desk with relief, she felt as if it stretched out dumb hands groping over her, the sense of Georgine Drummer's wary hostility.

She fortified herself by thinking of Highlans.

How pleasant yesterday afternoon and evening had been! How rich and easy and gay! She decided it should happen again, though, when he had pressed for another appointment, in the cab driving home, she had hesitated and left her answer vague. A thought had come to her: "Oh, I believe I ought not!" But now, with all this feminine element girding at her silently whenever she passed by, the devil entered her heart and fanned the beginnings of a blaze there.

Leslie's bell rang.

Mary went in, pad and pencil in hand.

He was standing on the hearthrug, hands in pockets, shoulders hunched. But his hard face was not unkindly. It had more the look of a man humorously accepting a beating from something much lighter than himself, something that he could crush with such ease, if he choose, that he didn't try.

"Sit down, please," he said, nodding to her chair, and she sat, pencil ready.

"No," he said, "put that away. I don't want work. I'm going to talk to you. You went to tea with Highlans yesterday, of course."

She agreed: "*Of course!*"

"Enjoy yourself?"

"Very much."

"Now," said Leslie, as if partly to himself, "I wonder why."

"I had a *delicious* evening."

"*Evening?*"

"We had dinner at Romano's afterward."

"Did you indeed?" he said, his slight

smile setting so that it made his face harder than when in repose. "Why did you do that?"

She looked up at him in amazement.

"Why? Well, why do girls go out to dinner?"

"Heaven knows!"

"Heaven probably doesn't," she said crossly, "but you do." Then dimples stole into her cheeks and she began her chuckling laugh. "Of course you know!" she said.

He sat down near her, leaning toward her, elbows on knees.

"But I don't really. It has often puzzled me—this restaurant mania of women's. You must tell me about it."

She considered and answered him seriously:

"Think how dull life would be if I just got up at the same time every morning, came here and worked, had a poached egg for lunch, returned here and worked, went home and to bed! And nothing more, ever!"

"Pretty appalling, I dare say."

"I want to have a good time, like other girls."

"Yes, child, I suppose you do."

"Like Miss Drummer."

"Good God, no!" he muttered hastily. Then, "Why Miss Drummer?"

"Her clothes are lovely, and her flat; and she is a friend of Sir James'."

"Is she?"

"Why, yes. What do you mean, Mr. Leslie?"

"I was just thinking over what you said. Look here, why choose Highlans? I can't go into minute explanations, but——"

"Well, whom should I choose?"

"There's that other——"

He meant Steven, of whom he had guessed, and she laughed.

"That would be just two people eating two poached eggs instead of one." Her face grew dreamy, her eyes remembered. "Glamour!" she said suddenly. "The other restaurants have

it—restaurants like the one I went to last night. I adore getting glimpses into a life I can't afford for myself!"

"If that is it," said Leslie, "won't you honor me?"

"Won't I——"

"Won't you let me show you the things you're so curious to see?" With a bitter flavor in the words, he added abruptly: "I'm safe, anyway."

Some sophism she must have heard or read bubbled up in her.

"Oh, safe's dull," she gurgled.

He started and stared at her; then put out his hand and took hers for a moment.

"You mustn't say that sort of thing, child. Of course it doesn't matter to me. But don't say it to Highlans or—or—even to your poached-egg friend."

Already she was blushing apologetically.

"Besides," he added, "I'm not so safe as all that, you know."

Getting up, he went to the mantelpiece and hunted for his pipe among the litter.

"Let's go to a musical comedy to-night," he said. She heard the amusement in his brusque voice, but there was eagerness, too.

"We'll dine early somewhere 'glamorous' and go anywhere you choose after. Will you come?"

She was inclined to a little resentment.

"Why are you asking me?" she said after a pause.

"Do you want to know?"

"If you'll tell me the real truth."

"Well, I must water it down, then," he said quietly. "I ask you because I want you to come very much indeed."

"Do you really?"

"Is that so hard to believe?"

She was blushing again, and looked very young.

"Of course, if you do—if you're not

asking me just because I said—— Out of charity, in fact."

He laughed.

"Charity!" he said contemptuously.

She thought.

"Of course I'd love——"

"Then that's settled. We leave here about six. That'll give us time for dinner. You will?"

"Thank you."

Leslie walked with her, overpowering, to the door.

"I'm not always horrible, you know," he said, hand on knob, barring her way.

"I don't think you horrible."

"But you do, child, you do."

When he had said this, he let her out, shutting his door brusquely again.

The lynx eyes over the other desk top noted the blankness of the writing pad in the girl's hand.

Two evenings! Two gorgeous consecutive evenings!

They dined at the Carlton grill.

Leslie was not horrible at all that evening. He was immensely kind, full of little cares and thoughts for her; and she never once caught that male look which she so distrusted in his eyes. She was surprised, afterward, by the happy way the evening flowed, by the strides they made in understanding, by the frankness with which she talked to him. He heard all about the vague, unresting ambitions, auntie's wet blankets, the impossibility of Steven Hands.

With that he agreed.

"A little house?" he said. "How big?"

"Three rooms up and two rooms down."

"And a charwoman twice weekly?"

"And a husband who thinks all married women are squaws."

"I congratulate you on resisting those temptations. But then," he said consideringly, "you wouldn't ever have taken him. You couldn't."

"How do you know that, you who scarcely know me?"

He did not reply to that.

"But would you rather work out your life in my office?" he asked.

"I don't intend to."

"What do you intend?"

"I don't know yet. Sir James talked to me about it yesterday. He made me think——"

"What?"

"All kinds of lovely things."

"Don't let him turn your head."

"He couldn't. I have a splendid adviser."

"Tell me."

And she told him about the best friend.

It was after two hours of laughter, when he was driving her home, that he reverted suddenly to the best friend. He had been sitting silent in his corner of the taxicab for several minutes.

"Are you," he said, "in love with that fellow?"

Her mind ran on the play they had seen.

"Whom?" she asked lightheartedly.

"Joe Coyne?"

"Joe Coyne! I mean that best-friend fellow."

"Why should you ask?"

"I'd like to know."

"I'm not in love with any one else."

"Nor likely to be?"

"Nor likely to be."

"Yet you've never seen him, you say? And you're never likely to see him?"

"No," she said, so softly that he had to lean toward her to hear.

"And so you think that a shadow is going to keep all the wolves in the world at bay?"

"Yes, if he goes on writing to me. And he writes every day. I write to him every night, however tired I am."

"I wonder what you'll tell him about to-night?"

"I shall say: 'Mr. Leslie is nicer than I thought.'"

"Had you crabbed me to him?"

"We had—talked about you," she replied evasively.

She sat thoughtful in her corner while he snatched glances at her.

"Do his letters mean so much to you?" he asked.

She answered: "I can't imagine what life would be without them."

"But some day you'll marry—you must. Men won't let you off. Don't you think it. Then do you suppose your husband will stand for this correspondence?"

"Won't he?"

"God bless you, no, child! Your husband's bound to be the most jealous fiend on earth! You'll make him so."

"Oh, why?"

"Because you can't help it, I suppose."

When they said good-by, he asked her:

"Has this evening been as 'glamorous' as last evening?"

She said, "Yes," chuckling. And pulling her hand away in a hurry, she called back, "Thanks so much," and was instantly running up the short paved path. She fitted her latchkey quickly, and he saw her pass into the darkness within.

The road was very cool, very silent save for the throb of the taxicab engine. A light appeared behind the drawn white blind of an upper window, and a slim shadow flitted across it.

Leslie jumped into the cab, slammed the door violently, lighted a cigarette, leaned back, closed his eyes.

Auntie toddled out from her room, in a nightie of flannelette, a shawl over her shoulders. She entered Mary's room sternly, without knocking. "Two nights running!" muttered auntie.

"I've had a lovely time," the girl replied, letting down her black hair.

"No doubt," said auntie.

"Auntie," said Mary, "to-morrow I must buy the stuff for my fancy dress. You *will* help me make it, won't you, duck? I think I'm going to be an angel."

"An angel! Now who suggested that?"

"My friend."

"Which one? I never saw such a girl for friends!"

"You know the one I mean. He said, 'Why not be an angel?' Don't you think it a good idea?"

"A libel on the angels," said auntie, smoldering.

"Ah, well, I wouldn't care to be a real one for ever and ever. But just for an evening——"

"You don't put me off with angels," said auntie, doubling back. "Who was it this time? Sir James again?"

"Mr. Leslie."

"No good'll come of it," said auntie.

"Go to bed," Mary replied.

Auntie went impotently; she was like a fire that has been stoked up with wet coal dust and simply longs to blaze.

CHAPTER IX.

That dance was a night of nights. Mary and Georgine Drummer went together, halving the expenses of the cab.

"And you'll come back, after, with me and sleep at the flat," was Georgine's decree. Despite her glittery eyes, her smile was easy and friendly, disarming the alarms she had lately sown in the younger girl's heart.

So they dined together in the flat and dressed together. True to inspiration, Mary had her little white robe with wings, but Georgine was a Spanish dancing girl, lithe, seductive.

The Leslies' house, in Cadogan Place, was brilliant with lights and festooned with flowers; and Dora Leslie,

receiving her guests at the entrance to the ballroom, looked more precious than ever. She was sheathed in cloth of gold and roped with pearls. Stacey stood by her, looking warily at every one. To Mary it was a scene of joy. The chatter, the laughter, the whole irresponsible harlequinade were rapturously new. One of the best bands in town was tuning up, and her feet were beating impatiently on the polished floor before the dancing had well begun.

Georgine, it seemed, knew many of the men present, and partners, some of whom she introduced carelessly to her companion, soon claimed her. But Mary's first partner was Leslie himself.

She was surprised by the fact that he danced well. And he was at his kindest. She had felt perfectly and happily at home with him since the evening when they had dined together at the Carlton, but the first dance to-night cemented what promised to be a friendship in, she thought dreamily, the queerest way. Floating round the room with him, being held as something infinitely precious, she became radiant, and many men looked at her and thought to themselves, and perhaps asked their partners:

"Who's the little angel?"

Georgine's partner asked her that, and she replied caustically:

"Angels are like Humpty-Dumpty. They inevitably have great falls."

Stacey, dancing with Dora Leslie, whispered: "Glen's plunged in from the deep end, eh?" and she said, with her light, hard laugh: "I think Georgine Drummer must be feeling pretty sick. Let's hope so, anyway."

Dora was one of those soft-bodied little women whose minds are of a metallic hardness, who are yet entrancing to men; and the man, looking down on the crown of her fluffed fair head, gave her a quick, fierce squeeze and murmured:

"It doesn't matter to *you*, anyway, eh, Dora?"

She smiled, "No," with an upward look meeting his eyes.

And just then they met and drifted past Glen Leslie and Mary, and each woman looked quickly at the other.

"You must give me several dances," said Leslie, "I want to talk to you a lot to-night."

The dance over, they studied the program together, and he put his initials against three numbers before bringing up a string of men to be introduced.

She danced with Stacey presently. Dora introduced him, with her curious smile that was sweet, keen, and false all at once, and Highlans appeared, claiming her intimately and urgently.

Leslie's three dances came consecutively. The first over, they sat out the other two in an upstairs conservatory on the balcony off the drawing-room. It was full of high palms and bushy hydrangea with their delicate and multiple colorings. A few tall lilies, forced to early maturity, scattered scent and golden pollen. Behind a bank of hydrangea and palm, Leslie found a seat.

"You're happy?" he said.

"How could I help it? Oh, Mr. Leslie, how lovely every one is! How do I look?"

He smiled at the jealousy tingeing her voice.

"Angelic," he said.

He touched the baby wings sprouting from her shoulders. The wings were of gauze, covered with swan's-down. "Did you make all this?"

"Auntie helped me. I've a wonderful auntie. Such an old duck! And such an old Tartar!"

Leslie listened to her sudden rich chuckle.

"That's very good and salutary for you," said he.

"You think I want bringing to order?"

"Who doesn't?"

"Some people are so controlled, so calm, so awfully strong. They're almost *fierce*—they're so strong. They wouldn't need any one to help them keep themselves in order."

"Are you trying to describe me?"

"Perhaps I am."

The conservatory, semi-twilight, seemed hushed in listening to the music far-off, down below. Every one else was dancing. Mary, dreamy, happy, swung a little foot in measure to the violins, and, rising from her throat like a nightingale's song, there suddenly broke a bar or two of music, trilling accompaniment. Utterly unself-conscious, she sat there in ecstasy, singing the slow waltz.

"Oh, isn't it heavenly?" said she. "I love dancing a hesitation almost better than a fox-trot."

Leslie regarded the swinging foot.

"You'd rather go down and dance?"

"No. I like sitting here with you."

"You're a real angel to say that."

"I love heaps of flowers. Does your wife spend lots of time here?"

"Very little. She's mostly out."

The girl put out a hand and touched a massed blossom of mauve hydrangea.

"Some day I'll have these—stacks of them."

"What's going to happen some day?" he said in a voice strangely troubled.

"What *isn't* going to happen?"

"Tell me your dreams, angel."

She answered promptly.

"First, to be rich." Then her abashed chuckle proclaimed shame.

"Aren't I greedy? But I want to be rich, very rich, and I shall be. I want it before I'm old, too. And what's more, I know I'll have it."

"Will a millionaire relation die——"

"I haven't any. No. I shall get my money for myself."

"But how?"

"I don't know. It's coming." She smiled a mystic smile that redeemed the sordid quality of her yearnings. "Then I'll have a delicious house, with hydrangea and whole forests of palms. I shall take auntie there—she'll house-keep—and I shall buy her the *handsomest* fur coat!"

"How old are you, angel?"

"Twenty."

"It's an age of miracles."

"When do miracles cease?"

"After thirty, miracles of that sort become merely industrial achievements."

"Thirty? Um-m. Thirty."

"It's a long time ahead, isn't it?"

"I can't imagine it."

He said, with a rashness that seemed as if he could not help it:

"Don't be afraid to imagine it. You'll probably be far more beautiful then than you are now—less sweet, perhaps, but with a hundredfold more power."

"What dreadfully nice things you're saying to me!"

He merely repeated: "Yes, a hundredfold more power. If your dreams come true, that is. If you stay where you are, in an office——"

"What will happen?"

"It does something to women that doesn't beautify them. It sets them. Women ought not to be creatures of routine."

"Ah, I shan't be."

"You haven't told me much about your dream, yet. We'd got to auntie's fur coat. What about your prince, Cinderella?"

"I told you about him at the Carlton."

"What? That letter-writing fellow?"

She was silent, bending her head. He saw her smiling slowly, and imaged her blush. Drawing a little nearer till he almost touched her, he said:

"You—you ought to put him out of your head. He's an impossibility."

"He tells me so."

"I don't know, given those conditions, that he has even a right to write to you."

"But I *want* his letters."

"That's why. He shouldn't be overshadowing you, making you turn good fellows down, perhaps."

"I don't agree with you."

"He's purely selfish."

"How dare you say so? If you could read his letters!"

"Why? What do you find in them?"

"All I want."

"Do you consider them love letters, Mary?"

"No! No!" she whispered quickly.

"Do you want them to be?"

Again she was silent, and he imagined, once more, her blush. She looked away and murmured something indignant and vague.

"He may be, probably is, a man like your Steven Hands. Or Highlans, even. There's no reason why it shouldn't be Highlans. Or," his voice tinged with contempt, "Stacey. Or some fat City chap with a wife and family in the suburbs, reaching out in his middle age for one more touch of foolish romance."

"Is romance ever foolish?"

She seemed actually to feel the weight of his deliberation and glanced up, on the verge of scare. He looked down at her, very near. Her heart beat thick. She felt it, the "man" look, rapt, heavy, burning. She put up her hand and stroked with her finger tips the fluttering pulses in her throat.

"No," he said. "Never foolish. Always divine."

The music below ceased imperceptibly. The feet and voices of dancers could be faintly heard, coming up the stairs, across the parquet floor of the drawing-room. Two people strolled into the conservatory and began to look,

with chatter and a little laughter, for a seat. They approached, rounded the shelter of palm and hydrangea, and came upon Glen Leslie and Mary hidden there quietly, speaking low.

They were Georgine and Highlans.

The few words spoken between the four broke the spell that had been laid upon Leslie. He became colder, quieter. And when the interlopers had withdrawn again, he turned with the most casual of questions.

"Who's your next partner, Miss Ellis? Can I find him for you?"

He lighted a match so that she could see to read her program. The little twilight world became commonplace

"It's Sir James."

"Then he's near at hand. They've gone to sit at the other end."

He talked about things that did not matter.

"Curious you like hydrangea. They always seem to me to look so artificial—the colorings, you know. In some places, they grow well, don't they? My wife's awfully fond of them—of these lilies, too. I think they smell horribly. I suppose you don't? Why do all women like scented places? I think it's a fox-trot next, and Highlans is exquisite, I believe."

Very soon Highlans was standing before them, solemnly saying:

"Leslie, it's no use fighting. I'm going to take Miss Ellis away."

"And I'm dancing with my wife, I believe," Leslie observed.

The music had already begun again, a fox-trot, with its syncopated cunning, its simulated stealth, its jolly abandon. Hurrying downstairs on Highlans' arm, crying: "Oh, don't let's lose a bar!" Mary was all gay girl again. She was ready with her chuckle when Highlans murmured in her ear: "Didn't you like 'Miss Ellis'?" although she murmured back: "You ought not to call me Mary, though, you know," and she was sparkling with anticipation of that fox-

trot before they reached the ballroom doorway. Highlans slid an arm round her on the threshold and led her off at once, and he said with joy:

"Oh, *aren't* you keen? What a pleasure to meet a girl who wasn't bored stiff in her cradle, who's out to enjoy herself, and does it, by Jove! And who can laugh! Do you know, Mary, that you've got the most irresistible laugh in London, you witch?"

After a turn round the room, he added:

"And a girl who can dance, too! My child, what are you made of? This isn't amateur dancing! This is *it*—very big *it*!"

As she followed him perfectly, fluently, in every devious step in which he tried her, looking around with his observant glance, he saw that the room noted them. He grew thoughtful.

"You *are* an angel," he said. In his arms she seemed to float, with never a false move of foot or muscle, with perfect interpretation, harmonious in sympathy. "You melt," he explained. "You're fluid. I've never had a partner like you. Do you know that you're sensational?"

As he said that, she saw Dora Leslie looking at her once more; and then, as they turned, across Dora's head, Leslie gave them a survey that was both live and watchful.

Georgine, passing and repassing, did not look at all. She was fox-trotting without her usual flair, with a weather-beaten youth, just from a lengthened stay in the Swiss Alps, who was telling her all about his exploits at the Winter Sports, and she was almost impudently bored with him.

Highlans said something about Georgine to Mary when, after the dance, he found a quiet corner for them both in a window embrasure on the stairs. It was:

"I say, Miss Angel, look out!"

"For what?"

And attentively he replied: "For squalls. I should say a regular tempest. Georgine Drummer's not very healthy as an enemy if you're in the same office, or even if you're not."

"An enemy? But——"

"I said an enemy. I repeat it."

"But we're friends."

"How infinitely dangerous!"

"I'm staying to-night at her flat. She asked me. It was kind of her."

"Are you, though, by Jove?" said Highlans, with tender concern.

"What do you mean, Sir James?"

"Don't you see that Leslie——"

"Yes?"

"Well?"

"What?"

"Oh, God knows I'm not going to explain to you!" he exclaimed in a slight, but very real irritation.

"I wish you would. *Please!*"

"I can't," he declared flatly.

"I hate mysteries!" said Mary. "I never make them."

"You haven't had much time. After thirty, you will make a lot."

"There seems still a good deal to happen to one even after thirty," she said thoughtfully, recalling Leslie's observation.

"Oh, there is, I assure you!"

"I suppose you know?"

"Well, I'm forty, and I haven't relinquished my feeble hold on life yet."

"Oh, but you're a man. That makes a difference," she said kindly. But all the same, she felt that forty was a great age.

He saw her thought, and though he smiled, he frowned at it.

"I'd like to show her about the enthusiasms of forty!" he said to himself, and refreshed his determination that he would.

"It's not only being a man," he said. "A clever woman of twenty or forty or ninety—I mean a woman clever in the woman way, not those classroom freaks—practically has an innings till

she's bowled out on her deathbed. There've been many such women." He recalled them, smiling.

She suddenly began to laugh. She chuckled and chuckled till he said, catching her arms:

"Look here, Mary, I think you'll be sorry if you go on laughing like that!" and he meant it, for she was going to his head.

She tried to sober.

"I was thinking of auntie. She's only sixty——"

And she began to laugh again, but he shook her a little, saying: "Now, don't! Auntie," he added, "has probably missed the way somehow. Poor dear!"

He appeared profoundly sorry.

Georgine passed them with her weather-beaten Alpine sportsman, and, turning her head toward the window where they dallied, she looked full at Mary, with no sign of friendliness, icy, critical.

"You dancing with Leslie again?" Highlans asked, when the couple had passed.

"No."

"Perhaps it's just as well."

He joined Leslie, later, in the task of tucking the two girls into their cab, and while he gave Georgine's arm a covert nip as of menace, his last considering look was for Mary.

CHAPTER X.

In the cab the girls were silent, but the bird of storm brooded. A sigh, a sharp movement, the tiny swish of silk petticoat as Georgine swung a long and slender foot—these were the rustle of the bird's ominous wings. In her corner, wrapped in a huge old Indian shawl that was auntie's only sartorial treasure, Mary huddled rather wearily. The warm and scintillating night had gone, the spring dark was cold,

and dawn had not yet begun to break down the streets.

So, in silence, they traversed the short distance from Cadogan Place to Georgine's flat.

In silence, too, they ascended in the lift, worked by the observant night-porter, who smiled discreetly at the dainty slippers beneath their cloak hems, saying with a familiar respect:

"Dancing again, miss?"

Georgine yawned, "Yes."

They were inside the flat. All was very still. Georgine led the way into her sitting room, where lights and a good fire burned and sandwiches and whisky were upon a table. She poured herself out a weak peg, splashing the soda water with a vicious rush into the tumbler.

"Have some?" she asked, hardly turning.

"No, thanks."

"Have a sandwich, then."

Mary curled up on the divan and ate. Georgine stood. Erect, limber, vibrant, she looked untired. Yet a slight haggardness had invested her face. She ate nothing, only sipped at the whisky, slowly, determinedly, as if gathering to herself its amber fire.

"What a lovely dance!" Mary said.

Then Georgine turned and looked down upon her.

"Ye-es?" she drawled.

That "Ye-es?" cleft through Mary. She looked up and saw the brown eyes fixed upon her, moveless, hard. The whole face appeared inexpressibly hard, with the rouge outlined sharply on the morning pallor of the cheeks, the red-outlined lips, and those eyes opaque as stones.

"Look here!" said Georgine, and paused. She put her hands on her hips and smoothed them down, bracing, poisoning herself.

She repeated, "Look here," with a hardly perceptible quiver, a sway of her

body as of a snake preparing to strike.

"What do you think you're doing?"

Crouched on the divan, Mary replied:

"I? Doing? Nothing. Except eating a ham sandwich."

"Chuck that," said Georgine, "and listen to me. What are you doing with Glen Leslie?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! Don't dare tell me that! You knew him before you came to the office!"

"I've told you I didn't. I'd seen him in the street."

"And made eyes. You knew he'd follow."

"How dare——"

"Chuck that!" said Georgine, harsher. "If there's anything I can't stand for, it's the heroic-virtue stunt. You know that he overrode anything I said to get you into the office."

"I don't!"

"Don't lie. Save yourself the trouble. I suppose you and he have often laughed together over the way you managed it."

Mary sprang from the divan and cried superbly:

"You're lying!"

"You went out to dinner with him the other night."

"What if I did?"

"What—if—you—did?"

"What business is it of yours?"

"You know very well."

"Mr. Leslie isn't your property——"

"Indeed?"

"—any more than he's mine."

With a sneer that made her hideous, Georgine said:

"Ah! Now you've qualified it. So—he's your property, is he?"

"I didn't say—I said——"

Something of the significance of Georgine's look and words stole in upon Mary. She stood petrified, scarlet-cheeked, with heaving breast.

"I'll tell you," said Georgine, flashing

on her. "Every one knows. He's in love with me. There wasn't any one else till you came. It was me all the time. Can't you see, you blind little dolt? How do you suppose those flowers come on my desk fresh every two days? Think they grow? Well, they don't. It's a standing order to a florist from Glen Leslie. He began it four years ago. I've been with him five years. Who do you suppose has consoled him these last four years for that little marble-hearted brute he married? I! I! The office knows it. Dora Leslie knows it, and she's terrified of me. She doesn't want him to desert her, to force her to divorce him. It would take a lot to force her, but I'd have done it, if you—— By God, how I hate you! I could kill you, standing there looking so meek in a white robe! You're clever. You know there's nothing that fetches a man so quickly as the idea of a devil in a white robe. I've been honest at least. I've never pretended——"

"Stop! You mean you and Mr. Leslie——"

"I do mean it! I mean everything!" She shouted it. "*Everything!* There!"

Retreating involuntarily against the wall, the younger girl looked at her.

"I'd have married him sooner or later," said Georgine vibrantly, "if it wasn't for you. What have you done? That's what I'm going to know to-night. How've you done it? You've no clothes, and he likes smart women. He used to love me for the mere way I turned out. And I kept him for four years." Her voice trailed off. "At least," she said gloomily, "at least, that is——" and there was a pause.

The flat was dead quiet.

"I'm going to know, exactly, how things are," said Georgine. "You're going to tell me."

"There is nothing to tell."

"Don't stare at me like that, like a kid hearing a story. You don't impose

on me, my dear. I know my own sex out and out, and I hate them. I thank God they hate me, too. Do you suppose I've any illusions? Alma Stone, Daisy Buttons, all the crowd, would have given their eyes to fascinate Glen Leslie. So would a hundred women. He's never been without consolation! Do you suppose it? But you're not going to make yourself a damned comfort to him, whatever you think. You're up against me, you fool! Fool? No. You're a snake in the grass—that's what you are! Now I'm going to know. He's made love to you?"

"No! No!"

Georgine reached her in a stride and, catching her arm, twisted it. Her face was convulsed, her body shook. The transformation was devastating. She was a stone-age barbarian, a scratch-cat woman.

Mary set her lips upon humiliation and pain. She stared at the other with distended eyes of fury and amaze.

"Don't struggle!" said Georgine. "It'll hurt you if you do! I've got a grip on you. I'm not one of your soft women. Now! Quick! He's made love to you?"

"Mr. Leslie? Made love?" And then she remembered him suddenly, in the conservatory bending near her. Georgine saw her face.

"He has!"

"He hasn't!"

"He *can* make love," said Georgine with a grim triumph that was yet strangely soft, and for a moment her grip relaxed, her body gave up its tension. Then, recovering, she shook Mary's arm, and cried: "Swear that!"

Into the quiet of the flat pealed the sound of the doorbell.

"Swear!" said Georgine, tightening her grip.

"I swear," Mary replied contemptuously, but she shook all over.

Georgine turned and ran down the

corridor. Her voice, roughened by irritation, sounded without.

"Oh, *you!* At this time! Whatever for?"

Another voice, which Mary recognized with a gasp of relief as Highlans', reached her:

"You look upset, Georgine."

"Upset? I?"

"Even you. I'm glad I came."

"Why have you come?"

"I was passing on my way home, don't you know?"

"I don't know. If your chauffeur hasn't learned his London better than that, you should fire him."

"You leave my chauffeur alone. Can I come in?"

"No."

"Just for a minute?"

"No."

"I'm coming in. It was merely politeness to ask first of course."

Exactly how Highlans accomplished his entry by physical force Mary did not know, for Georgine was in no mood to be trifled with; but in a moment there he was, advancing into the sitting room with his inevitable smile, remarking warily:

"Ah, here's the angel."

She had her back to the door and was gripping the mantelpiece hard, bending her head to stare into the fire. Shocked and angry tears had come; she was biting her lip, and struggling for composure. Because of the tears she would not turn round, but only emitted a muffled laugh that trembled.

For barely a second, Highlans observed the winged white back presented to him. Then he looked at Georgine; his face was serious, and Highlans serious was no more to be trifled with than a Georgine throw-back to the stone age.

Georgine put her hands on her hips, smoothing them down, bracing and poisoning herself, and looked at him.

Highlans advanced till he stood just at Mary's shoulder.

"Are you really staying here to-night?" he asked.

She burst out: "No."

"Glad I brought my car round, then," he replied.

"What utter rubbish!" said Georgine, hands on hips, eyes glowing.

But Mary looked at Sir James, heedless of her tears in the new relief.

"My things——" she stammered, and rushed out.

"Damn you, Georgine!" said Highlans pleasantly.

Georgine sat upon the divan and took a cigarette. In silence she accepted the match Highlans held, and began to smoke.

"You're in a sinister mood," he said, after watching her a moment. And he went out into the corridor, closing the door behind him.

Mary was already emerging from the bedroom, carrying her holdall, into which she had crumpled her day clothes anyhow. Auntie's Indian shawl was huddled round her. Her black head, crimson cheeks, and wet eyes emerged from its golden folds with an effect of passionate distress. She looked to Highlans as to a savior.

"I'm glad to see you," she said incoherently, thrusting what he considered the basket-work atrocity into his outstretched hand. "Oh, so glad to see you!"

"All's right with the world then," he returned gayly, and ran her out to the waiting cab.

The chauffeur received the holdall critically, and she got in with Highlans' hand under her arm.

Highlans did not move his hand. When they had started, he slid it down till it held her own. She was aware of an onrush of tears again.

"Poor kid!" said Highlans quietly. "You mustn't try a rough-and-tumble with Georgine, you know."

She murmured.

"You're shaking," said Highlans, and he had his finger across her pulse.

Again she murmured vaguely in a broken whisper.

He hesitated a moment. Then:

"Oh, good God!" he said. "Why can't you cuddle up against me and be comfortable? What *does* it matter?"

And the next moment he drew her to him, and even as she began: "It does matter, and you know it would, and I know, and——" she put her head down on his shoulder and cried.

Highlans was very nice. That was the word. He held her without a hint of passion. She became utterly confident in him; indeed, ceased almost to think of the fact that she was in his arms: He was consoling and quiet, and so sensible about the need for a handkerchief. She couldn't find hers, and he had a clean, folded silk one ready without being asked for it. She found herself, as she alternately gasped in a fresh sob and dried her eyes after it, telling him everything.

"And she thinks I've been plotting to get him from her. M-me! Try to get a married man from *anybody*! Why, I-d-d-don't w-w-want him. I d-d-don't want any one! T-t-there's just one man I write to. That's all. I only w-w-want a nice time like other girls have, w-w-without all these worries——"

"They'll never dissociate themselves from a nice time, my dear, so long as a nice time includes *us*."

"But other g-g-girls——"

"Include us, you poor, small lunatic."

"W-w-well, I don't s-s-see——"

"You'll have to grow up, then. You simply must grow up, Mary. You're the most tantalizing thing."

She seemed to be thinking; then burst out:

"Do you believe it?"

"About Leslie and Georgine. Well, she thought she'd fixed him, you know. A good many people thought so."

"But—he?"

"He admired her, of course," said Highlans evasively.

"But she said——"

"One man can't really give another away, you must realize."

"I r-really hadn't noticed anything——"

"Leslie was completely off the whole thing a year ago," said Highlans with an air of finality. "He cooled off. Every one knew. But she—she didn't exactly want to let go. And I'm not going to make any surmises about it if you think I am, Miss Adventures."

"I'm not asking you to make surmises."

"And I'm not driving you all this long way home for the purpose of talking about two extraneous people."

She looked up at him with her face foreshortened as he remembered it the first time he had driven her home.

"You're good to bring me home at all," she began to murmur.

Highlans suddenly looked out of the window.

"Where are we?" he asked himself. He saw. They were nearing that narrow road where she lived. "Mary," he said, with a new note in his voice, "Mary," more urgently, "we're nearly there. What a shame! There's only another minute or two." And he put his mouth on hers quickly, and when he felt the recoil of her body, held her to him by sheer force for an instant.

The next moment she was sitting away from him in her corner of the cab; and, holding her hands, he begged:

"Forget that! Now forget it! It hasn't happened. There! I needn't even ask you to forgive me for something that never happened at all."

She had literally nothing to say.

"Mary," said Highlans, wheedling,

respectful, "you know what I told you about your future? I believe in it. And I've a definite idea that I want to carry out next Sunday if you'll come to tea again in my rooms. Will you? I promise you, you won't be sorry."

She began, "If——"

"I will behave *perfectly*, Miss Adventures," he said earnestly. "I was only saying 'Good night.' Only that."

How easily troubled she was!

"You're not worrying over that—over me?" he asked solicitously.

"No. If——"

"I've promised. Now please trust me and come on Sunday."

They were before auntie's gate.

"Thank you," she said with sudden resolution. "I will."

"Brave girl!" cried Highlans.

Their final good night was a laughing one.

Dawn broke in at her window when

she sat down and poured out her heart in a fevered pencil scribbling.

What shall I do? Ought I to leave? Everything seemed so happy, so *perfect*. Will there always be these troubles? All I want is what I've told you—to get on. I want to make myself rich. But no one believes that of a girl. It was a dreadful scene. *Dreadful!* It's made me feel ashamed of—I don't know what.

You will write me a very wise letter about it? But don't scold. I have done nothing—*nothing!*

I'll tell you something. It made me very disappointed about Mr. Leslie. I was beginning to like him. I had begun to think he was different somehow—you know how I mean.

Men puzzle me. I don't suppose you'll explain them to me because "a man can't give another man away." Some one said that to me to-night. It was Sir James Highlans, who, as I've told you here, came and rescued me from Georgine's flat and drove me home.

But then he kissed me. Oh, I'm tired of it! You are such a relief, best friend.

MARY.

TO BE CONTINUED.



THE FLOWER

I FOLLOWED the quiet light;
My heart named it your name.
I came to your door in the night,
A beggar of love, I came.

Stilled by the light at your door,
Stilled by your starry power,
I asked you for nothing more,
Than the gift of a flower.

I have lived, I have lived for this!
This passionless moment my goal—
The cool white flower of your kiss
On my burning, weary soul!

FLORA FIELD.



The Right to Happiness

By Lawrence Perry

Author of "A Romantic Liar," "Prince or Chauffeur," etc.



WELL, Gerald!" The expression in Miriam Lowe's dark eyes involved something more significant than formal greeting, and she slipped her arm through Lansing's without awaiting his offer of escort. It was an act symbolical of their understanding, a tacit acceptance of the usual, the understood thing. There was, too, something of the proprietary in voice and action, a note that had been deepening in the past months until now it appeared to have lost the last shade of tentativeness or caution.

Exalted, as he always was when near her, Gerald Lansing was quick to catch and to share a certain unwonted tenseness, a flame in which they seemed to fuse—one in thought, in mood, in passion. Her gown was of a soft, creamy-hued material; with her bare arms and shoulders, her glowing dark hair, she impressed him as a study in various tones of ivory. And what was there, what indefinable essence of manner or air, that so thrilled him with a sense of the exotic?

"I'm to take you in to dinner," he said, banally enough as it seemed to him; certainly so in view of the surging emotions that filled his mind.

She smiled faintly.

"To dinner—or anywhere, Gerald."

Her voice was unemotional, and yet all needed emphasis was contained in that precise, definite shading of every

word which proclaimed to Lansing's acute sensitiveness no unconsidered utterance. He paused, bewildered, knowing it for what it was, an interpretation of a situation that he had consistently ignored, while at the same time perfectly conscious of the impulses that were thrilling and exalting and carrying him he knew not whither.

Now Miriam Lowe had spoken, and the facts were before his eyes. For those few words of complete abandon had given point to the drift, had defined their course as clearly as the searchlight ray from a groping vessel stencils against the night the vivid line of some out-jutting promontory. His first dominant emotion was relief. Then a thrilling, tingling recklessness filled him, and his eyes, which met hers, and the rigidity of his bearing, marked the tremendous interval.

They moved slowly to the door, lingering as the various couples made their way into the dining room.

Lansing watched them as from the altitude of a sudden and complete aloofness. They were his friends, all—his neighbors, excellent folk of the sort to be found among well-to-do suburban dwellers who think and live in terms of the near-by metropolis. How much they had all meant to him in the way of careless, genial relationship—until the past year, which had brought Miriam Lowe into the community! There was nothing of melan-

choly in the thought. He who had written so much of life had been taught to live, to pulse with quickening blood. What else could—or should—possibly count?

His arm pressed Miriam's. Gently, almost imperceptibly came the return pressure. As they reached the table and she sank into her seat, he suddenly leaned downward and spoke under his breath, watching with strained eyes as the mass of gleaming dark hair nodded slightly. He stood then for a moment in abstraction.

"Gerald, really I don't think Miriam needs a permanent footman; certainly not one so preoccupied. Besides, dinner can't proceed without you, you know."

In the chorus of laughter and banter that followed Molly Lansing's sally, he recovered himself sufficiently to smile easily and to take his seat without discomfort.

Gazing upon his wife, the thought came that to other men she must be as handsome and generally attractive as any woman need be. A creature of impressions, he was, curiously enough, struck by this one. How many years had it been since he had regarded her thus objectively, since he had looked upon her, not as he looked upon his own face in a mirror, but as a separate entity, with a life of her own, thoughts of her own—in short, with an individuality which, in the original instance, had attracted, then fascinated, then held him through many years? What had happened? Only the other night, she had come to him with a look of appeal in her handsome brown eyes and, apropos of nothing—or at least nothing that she would admit—had remarked that he had no idea how interesting she could be if he would only admit her to his thoughts.

Now he began to realize what she had meant. She had seen; others must have seen. But still there came no feel-

ing of guilt; depression, rather. How he had loved her! Good God, he loved her now, so far as that went! No man of fine feeling can blot out the past, and Gerald Lansing's years had been all gold—the long, unceasing fight, with its cumulative success, and now, in his mid-forties, the crown, the recognition of sterling literary achievement. Through it all Molly Lansing had been at his side, glorying in his triumphs; not always understanding, to be sure — Yet was that just to her? His brow wrinkled thoughtfully. What was it she had said about interesting him? Well, after all, this was no time for thoughts of the sort.

With something of irritation, his mind wavered to his daughter Alicia, a singularly beautiful girl who sat next to young Jerrems. Jerrems? He was succeeding in business, they said. Lansing had heard rumors concerning the two. He frowned. They were far too young for such nonsense. Besides, the country was at war, and all the young fellows were enlisting. He wondered what Molly Lansing had permitted this thing to go on. But it was her affair, not his. He had his own problems.

As he emerged from his reverie, the flow of conversation about the table had the ring of unreality, and the flowers, the flickering lights of the candles, bore subtly in upon his mood. He started palpably when Miriam Lowe turned protestingly and so couched her complaint as to include him in the talk: "Gerald, do you agree with Doctor Wilson? I don't."

Lansing shook his head vaguely.

"I don't think I was paying attention."

"You weren't. We were speaking," explained Wilson, "of the right to happiness. Miss Lowe denies my contention, and says there isn't any such right—that we have to make it."

Lansing laughed.

"Well, that's the law of life, I imagine. I agree with Miriam."

"There is at least the right not to be happy."

Lansing started at this paradox of his wife's, one of those flashes which so frequently came to jar him out of settled conceptions concerning the range and facility of her mind.

Miriam Lowe laughed.

"Can't we worry along without that?"

"If we do," replied Molly Lansing, a trifle emphatically, "we worry along without martyrdom, without self-sacrifice——"

"Without, in fact, any of the things that have made life great, noble, and worth the living," interrupted Doctor Wilson. "A very happy thought, Molly——very."

"But," persisted Miriam, "there's happiness in martyrdom—supreme exaltation, isn't there?"

"That," smiled Molly, "is quibbling."

She turned to reply to a remark of Atterbury's upon another subject, while Miriam faced Lansing petulantly.

"It wasn't quibbling, Gerald."

He frowned.

"Most argument is quibbling, isn't it? But what matter? The thing that counts is that I've seen little but the corner of your shoulder since we sat down."

"Well? Now?" She smiled at him provocatively, and his blood raced.

"I—I want to talk," he murmured. "I mean to you—alone."

He saw the blood rush to her face, and under the table her hand stole, resting for a moment upon his arm.

"Some ages from now, the dinner will end."

It seemed indeed ages before the various courses had been served and the languid postprandial conversation came to an end.

As the hostess drew back her chair, upon a suggestion for music, Lansing

and Miriam rose together, lingering for a few moments in the drawing-room and then, by tacit consent, stepping out through a door into the conservatory.

Lansing paused at a table in the center of the apartment, hesitated, and then lowered the light of a tall, red-shaded lamp so that only a faint crimson glow fell upon leaves and flowers of the plants, throwing the extremities into a gloom in which Miriam's tall, slim figure was vaguely defined.

She was standing by one of the large window openings, gazing through the trees, where a nebulous glow heralded the rising moon. The warm evening wind swept her face and bore to Lansing, advancing softly to her side, the subtle perfume of which she was so fond and which he had always regarded as the essence of her. Outside, the night was filled with mysterious sounds. From the distant river came the veiled chorus of frogs; nearer, were all the nocturnal manifestations of insect life, and the swaying branches sent forth their weird monody.

He caught her hand, and she suffered him to hold it, her fingers, in fact, twining tightly among his own. For a moment they stood thus, silent. Then he spoke, in a strained, muffled voice:

"Miriam, have we done with trifling? Shall we despise ourselves, unable to look the world or each other in the face? Or have we the courage of our convictions? I love you. I never knew what love was——"

She turned to him, her bosom swiftly rising and falling, giving hint of emotions that were not indicated in her reply.

"Do you realize all you are saying, Gerald?"

"Realize!" He laughed shortly. "You know me, Miriam, as no woman ever knew me. Do you have to ask me that?"

She was gazing at him gravely.

"No, I don't think I do." She freed

her hand and raised it as he started. "I know I don't, Gerald."

She seemed swaying toward him, her gleaming arms half raised in an exaltation of abandonment so utter that for a moment he stared at her dazed, unable to speak.

The moment was much too big for him. He was at a loss what to do with it. He had been living in a dream and now, at the culmination, had awakened, standing in the living presence of what throughout had been unreality. Thus confronted, he was dazed, staring forward into a future that was merely a luminous blur. Yet desire was just as keen—keener, in fact, than it ever had been. She was his to take; all her beauty and grace and infinite charm, her wit, her intellect—his! He could feel it all—and more. And he gloried, too, in the knowledge that her spell invested him absolutely, bound him to her, dominated every instinct, inherited or acquired. It was the moment of madness in which humanity triumphs over the might of custom and tradition and bends the very course of the world to its own ambitions, ideals, or desires.

He had drawn very close to her; he could feel her quick breath upon his cheek. Slowly his arms went out to take her. Then, involuntarily, he knew not why, they fell heavily to his sides.

"What shall we do?" he muttered.

She gazed at him, her dark face swimming in the soft glow, her mobile lips parted.

"Isn't that for you to say, Gerald? I am free. You are not."

"Free!" He threw back his head and laughed, deriding his moment of doubt. "Free!"

Before he could move, her hand went suddenly out, pressed upon his lips. Impulsively he seized the soft, firm fingers and held them to his mouth and kissed them. Then, as he raised his eyes, he saw that her face was turned toward the doorway, and with a flush

of embarrassment, he realized that her action had been one of warning, not of passion.

In the oblong block of soft light, his daughter was standing, young Jerrems close at her side. As he watched, they moved into the conservatory, too engrossed in themselves, apparently, to think of ascertaining whether or not they were alone. And, as a matter of fact, Miriam and Lansing were in a remote corner of the apartment, shielded by a group of potted palms.

Lansing was arising to make his presence known when the clear, softly modulated voice of his daughter gave him pause, strangely impressed not only by what she said, but by her manner, her ineffable dignity, her poise.

"You've told me, Rex, that you love me. You haven't asked me how I feel toward you, but I think you ought to know. I love you, too, dear. I love you so that something seems to hurt me inside."

Lansing glanced instinctively at Miriam. Her face was turned out toward the night, and Lansing followed her gaze into the soft darkness, where the shrubbery melted amorously into the lawn, and the huge, shadowy bulk of the elms and maples rose to blot out the stars. Something seemed to catch in his throat. Why, it was only yesterday that Alicia had been a scrambling, hurtling little hoyden, all legs and pig-tails, and Rex Jerrems a boy who had never been known to have hands or face even passably clean. And now! Without conscious volition, his head turned toward the two. They were evidently seated upon one of the settees near the door. He could not see them. There had been a silence. Now his daughter spoke again:

"So you know now what your decision means to me, Rex." There was a short pause. "I don't want to be a drag. I should loathe it. You feel you

ought to go? I mean, that it's your duty?"

Lansing heard the scratching of a match and the aroma of cigarette smoke stole among the plants.

"I've tried to think it wasn't, Alicia. There isn't a way I haven't tried to duck it, to get around it. But I can't. Everywhere I turn, why"—the boy laughed shortly—"there's the finger pointing at me—duty. I'm young, strong, athletic, a good shot—"

The girl replied musingly:

"But there are so many who are going—men and boys who haven't a thought of getting married and doing their share in carrying on the social life. But you—we *are* going to marry. You'll have to give up your position with Vernon & Co. You will, won't you?" she added, after a short silence.

"Yes—of course."

"And if you—when you come back, it may be two or three years— You'll have to begin all over again, Rex."

"I know it," was the low reply. "The whole thing's just rotten."

Rex had risen and was pacing up and down the floor. Lansing caught glimpses of his fine, boyish profile between the leaves of the palms. Miriam Lowe had not moved, her eyes still directed out into the night.

"They say"—Alicia's voice was too obviously casual—"that it's perfectly honorable to wait until your turn comes in the draft. Father says that all the high numbers have one chance in twenty of being called."

"Oh, I suppose it's honorable enough, Alicia." The boy's voice was troubled. "But, don't you see, I can't face the chance of *not* being called? I—yes, I ought to go. That's absolutely the fact—I ought. And if I wasn't conscripted, I'd go through life knowing that I was one American who had fallen down—"

"But wouldn't that be just—sensi-

tiveness?" There was a quaver in Alicia's voice.

"No—no, it wouldn't, Alicia. It would be the natural feeling of a man with red-blooded, patriotic instincts who didn't have enough moral and physical courage to face the music." Rex's voice rose. "Oh, I've been all over the whole thing, Alicia! I have a fine position with good prospects, I've got lots of friends and the best parents a boy ever had—and I've got you, God, Alicia, don't think I want to go! I don't! I hate war! It's a messy game from the drop of the hat! There isn't an ounce of good sportsmanship in any part of it! It's just"—his voice fell—"plain murder!"

"Rex!"

"It's all of that." The voice and manner under stress of emotion had grown boyish; none the less, that very element gave dignity and nobility. "I'm an American, thank God! My grandfather was killed at Gettysburg, and look what he did for you and me and all of us in dying. He helped hand down to the future this wonderful country, where you and I have lived so happily and had so much fun. I never saw it in that way before. Then look at what we're fighting for—liberty, Alicia. Not liberty for ourselves, but for another continent. There aren't any two ways of thinking about it. It's a question of duty."

"Darn duty!" Alicia laughed quiveringly.

"That's what I say," returned the other. "Sometimes it's pleasant to do your duty, but most times it's hard as the mischief. But what kind of a man is it that doesn't face it just the same?"

Duty! Lansing winced at the fresh young voice, filled with the stern consciousness of man's newly found estate. Then it dawned upon him that his daughter was weeping, and that her lover was trying to comfort her.

"You speak of duty," she gulped,

"and yet have you always done your duty?"

"I wish I could say that, Alicia."

"Yes, and—and now you talk of duty when you know you really want to go, because you like ex—excitement and you—you——"

"Alicia!"

She arose swiftly, her arms thrown about his neck.

"Rex! Rex, forgive me! I didn't know what I was saying! I—I do want to help you! I want you to do what is right. And—and it is your duty to go. I knew it all the time, but I was a coward and didn't dare admit it. But I'm going to be a brave girl now, Rex. I'm going to try to be worthy of you. I know the fight you've been having—and I haven't helped. But I will now. I—I love you. There's no one in the world I love half so much. And I'm going to let you go, help you to go. That's *my* duty."

"It's bigger than mine, Alicia."

Lansing turned away, his face working, as the two stood a moment locked in each other's arms and then, separating suddenly, walked into the drawing-room.

"Duty!" He faced Miriam Lowe, marveling at the placidity of her poise when emotions of such enormous import were filling him. "You heard, Miriam?"

"Why, yes." She smiled. "It's one of those detestable things that one can't help——"

"Detestable!"

"Our overhearing—yes. Yet I'm glad, too. Rex Jerrems was magnificent—surprisingly so. Alicia, too. I hadn't really thought it of her."

"No." Lansing was searching her eagerly. "Alicia was a little girl only yesterday."

He waited, but she was silent, toying with a drapery of her gown. He gestured impatiently.

"You can see, of course, what they were doing, Miriam?"

She reached out and touched him upon the shoulder, a way she had when he was overwrought, a gesture that, from her, had always held a potency out of all proportion to the effort involved. But now he tossed his head.

"Can't you see, Miriam?"

"Why, yes, perfectly." Her voice was composed, almost indifferent. "But really, Gerald——"

Lansing stared at her an instant and then paced to the end of the conservatory. Returning, he confronted her agitatedly.

"It isn't what they want, what they would like; it's what they believe they should do—duty! Duty to what? To a theory of patriotism; to something they've never felt, or known concretely. It was the blood coming out, showing. Duty! God, must we learn always from our children? Miriam, I blush, I'm ashamed! It was all *my* right to happiness, nothing else, counting. *My right to happiness*—bah! What right have I, or any individual that bucks against duty and honor and decency and——"

He raised his hand as she made to speak, but none the less her words came.

"I didn't think you were a fool," she said sharply. As he drew back with a sharp breath, she added quickly: "And I don't think so now, dear boy. You're not thinking clearly."

"Clearly!" He gestured protestingly. "My mind was never so clear—never so free from doubt. Is it—is it possible, Miriam, that you don't understand?"

"If you're harping upon your wife's abstract theory of the right not to be happy—yes, I understand that, Gerald. But——"

"But?" He waited eagerly, painfully, for her justification, for whether

she knew it or not, that was what he now demanded.

"But——" She hesitated; then stepped close to him and placed her hands about his neck, her fingers locked, her head thrown back so that her throat gleamed beneath his eyes.

The right not to be happy! He stood for a moment rigid, his lips parted, his face white. With all his instincts of conservatism and fair dealing and honor trembling in the balance, he craved above all justification, as he now saw, not only for Miriam—but for himself. The right not to be happy! The phrase ran like fire through his mind, livid with kindled interpretations. But she had not gone on; she had stopped, checked perhaps by the very hidden force of the quotation. And then—nothing, nothing but this appeal of the earth, of the fundamental flesh! Was that all it had ever been? As the answer came, cold with reason, he shivered.

Reaching upward, he caught her hands and slowly disengaged them. Then, still holding her fingers, he stared fixedly into her face. Slowly she opened her eyes and returned his gaze. Was there something of contempt about her lips? In the dim light, he could not be certain. He felt her hands snatched suddenly from his grasp.

"Gerald, if you're going to continue to be hysterical——" Her voice, faintly ironical, was like a cold douche.

"Hysterical! Am I?" He stared at her, still marveling at her mood. She was nodding slowly.

"Quite, Gerald. Carried away by an idea, you——" She paused, laughing bitterly, evidently reconsidering what she had been about to say.

"Yes?"

She turned from him, shrugging resignedly.

"Oh—nothing; nothing at all. What's the use, really? I——"

The figure of Molly Lansing appeared in the doorway. She was peering into the apartment. For a moment the two stood silent, watching.

"Miriam—Miriam Lowe, are you—— Oh, I see you!" She laughed. "Won't you sing for us, like a dear? There seems to be a general demand—— Gerald, I didn't see you at first. You will sing, won't you, Miriam? Any little thing."

As the younger woman nodded and stepped into the room, Lansing advanced to his wife's side.

"Molly," he said, "I want you to see the lawn with the moon coming over the trees. It's quite remarkable."

She glanced at him with a quick, pleased smile. Then, she linking her arm through his, they entered the conservatory and stood, thus, watching the dark foliage springing into silvery distinctness.

"Beautiful!" Molly Lansing turned to him. "Do you remember that first night at Stockbridge, Gerald?"

"I'm remembering many nights—through all the years," he replied; then, hurrying on, "Your phrase—'The right not to be happy'—it sticks, Molly."

"Does it?" She regarded him, smiling. "I'm flattered." Then her face seemed to grow hard. "Does this mean, Gerald, that you're going to avail yourself of that right? I mean"—she paused, searching his face—"I mean—Miriam."

"It means," he said grimly, "that I—that I have *relinquished* it."

She gazed at him a moment, puzzled. Then a radiant smile spread slowly over her face.

"Oh!" she breathed.

Her arm tightened upon his, and they stood together gazing into the fairy night, while Miriam Lowe's full, rich voice, hurrying lightly over a Gallic roundelade, floated past them into the distant gloom.



“Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat”—

By F. E. Bailey

V.—Puppy Walking

THE colonel, meeting Laureline in the lane, saluted.

“Good morning,” he began. “You’re the one person I want to talk to if you can spare a minute. Can you spare it?”

Laureline, who liked the colonel and knew he respected her, thought she could. He was young for his job—not much over forty. He did not wear a single eyeglass, or bristle, or go about like an imminent explosion; neither was he a regular, nor given to fatuous compliments. Also, he had imagination, a commodity almost unknown in colonels. He dismounted, linked the reins over his arm, and fell into step beside Laureline and her amorphous terrier.

“I want to talk about Ronnie Fitzgerald,” he said.

Laureline had most beautiful legs, soon to disappear forever because her sixteenth birthday approached. Her ripe-corn plait, and the forlorn beauty of her perfect face, drove subalterns distracted. Just now her violet eyes clouded. The topic evidently did not please her.

“Ronnie Fitzgerald bores me to death.”

The colonel nodded, as if he had expected as much.

“Speaking unofficially, he bores me, and he also bores the adjutant. His platoon is the worst in the battalion. I was wondering if you could help us.”

“Where do I come in?” asked Laureline, who knew perfectly well.

“It’s my business to be aware of a lot of things. In the first place, I don’t want you to think me a busybody or anything beastly. I know Ronnie at any rate imagines he admires you very much. Now he’s not a bad youth, but he isn’t big enough to run a violent passion and a platoon at the same time. I doubt whether any one is, as a matter of fact. So I thought of asking you, if you wouldn’t mind, to excite in him an ambition to have the smartest platoon in the army. He’d have a shot at it for you. In his present mood, I doubt if he would for me. I don’t want to report unfavorably on him. Will you do it for me?”

The colonel had a terrible, direct simplicity. Laureline, as she decided to capitulate, indulged herself in just a small moan.

“I’d do anything for you, but please realize the tremendous thing you’re asking! A boy in love is the most hopeless creature on earth. He follows you about with great, hungry eyes, and thinks you’re too sacred to flirt with, and wants to bite every other man that looks at you. And if I’m not very careful, Ronnie’ll propose, and want to kiss me, and be very injured when I turn him down. Still, I s’pose I mustn’t consider myself when the empire’s needs are at stake. Will you let him come to tea this afternoon, and give him an invitation for me, please?”

The colonel nodded gratefully, and a smile of considerable charm brightened

his steady eyes. He had known intuitively that Laureline would not fail him.

"Thanks awfully," he said and held out a hand in farewell. "You're a brick of the deepest dye."

As he cantered away, Laureline sighed a little. She knew so well what she had before her.

II.

Ronnie Fitzgerald sat in the second most comfortable chair of Laureline's mother's drawing-room. The most comfortable contained Laureline, in a little frock that toned amazingly with her violet eyes, a little frock of the softest blue silk. Ronnie's good-looking, slightly petulant face betrayed the fact that he lacked nothing. This was no benighted parade ground where one drilled, or attempted to drill, men of monumental stupidity under the basilisk eye of a regimental sergeant major with a heart of granite and lungs of brass. This was a garden of love, a paradise tenanted by a *peri*—or *hour*i, or whatever you called it—beautiful beyond all dreams. Ronnie glanced down at his new tunic and sighed dreamily.

"It was nice of the colonel to give you my message," murmured Laureline, crossing her beautiful silk legs. "He's rather a dear, isn't he?"

Ronnie grunted.

"He's all right to you, I dare say. Any one would be, Laureline. They couldn't help it. He's a perfect fiend on parade. He curses worse than the adjutant. He's always down on me, too. He doesn't like me. Can't think why he let me come this afternoon. I expect he's trying to cut me out with you, and wants to create an impression of generosity."

Laureline thought behind her smile. She was being very nice to Ronnie. She thought of his quiet assumption that there was any desirable position

from which to cut him out. She calculated amusedly how long, supposing Ronnie to occupy any such position, it would take the colonel to do the cutting out. The egotism of boys always amazed her nearly as much as the humility of old, tired men.

"You don't like the colonel, you mean, Ronnie. You don't show him your best side. You simply imply to him that you don't care, and then, of course, he curses you. It's his job. Aren't I right?"

"I don't think so, Laureline. You don't understand brutes like that. He's got no fine feelings—no soul. He couldn't really love any one, for instance."

Ronnie's eyes looked world-shaking passions as he spoke. Laureline, a friend of the colonel's, kept the laughter out of her voice with an effort.

"Ronnie, I don't like being wrong. I'll bet you a pair of gloves that if you try hard for a fortnight, and get your men to stamp about in that lovely way colonels like, he'll say something nice. Is it a go? I wear sixes."

Ronnie rose out of his seat, took her cup and refilled it, brought it back, offered her cake, and rested himself daringly on the arm of her chair. She bore it for the colonel's sake. After all, a fortnight soon passes.

"It isn't fair, Laureline," he objected, taking her hand and playing "Three Little Pigs" with her fingers artlessly. "You see, I've got to win because you want me to. And yet it's heads you win, tails I lose, for it'll mean an awful grind during the fortnight, and I shall have to keep it up once I start. The gloves are nothing. You know I'd do anything for you, let alone give you a pair of gloves."

"Then what are you grumbling about?" asked Laureline, who was only human.

"I want just a tiny reward for be-

ing a good child. Will you bet me a kiss, Laureltine?"

"If a kiss is only a tiny bit of a reward, I don't think I will. My kisses are not so numerous that they can be called that."

"Laureltine, don't be so cruel! You know I didn't mean——"

Laureltine sighed. She saw in her mind's eye the tall, spare, hard-working figure of the colonel, and knew it had to be. Nevertheless, it seemed difficult.

"Very well. But you mustn't see me all during the fortnight, and you must work like blazes. It'll do you good, Ronnie. You're getting too soft and full of cake. Will you stick to the bargain?"

"Rather! But supposing he doesn't say anything?"

"Then you'll have to ask him if he sees any improvement. Say you've got a bet on with a girl, or anything tactful like that," cooed Laureltine, beginning to be natural now that she had gained her point.

After he had gone, she wrote a little note on her own pink paper with "Laureltine" embossed in a circle at the top, sealing it with mountains of pink wax whereon the seal also embossed "Laureltine." It was her one childishness.

DEAR COLONEL STREATLEY: I've had your cub subaltern to tea and bet him that you'll say something nice in a fortnight if he works hard. As he will work, please do, if you can. During the fortnight, he's not to see me, which is something. I wanted to bet him gloves, but he insisted on making it a kiss, so nothing can save me whether I win or lose. I tell you this simply to show that I've stopped at nothing to help you. Yours sincerely,
LAURELTINE SHAW.

When the colonel read the note, he swore in language so wonderful that the adjutant, who happened to be in the orderly room, gazed at him with profound respect. The colonel then replied to Laureltine, on nasty whitish paper embossed with the royal arms:

DEAR MISS SHAW: You're a brick, and you deserve the V. C. As for our friend, he is unprintable and shall sweat blood for this! I will say something nice if I possibly can. Many, many thanks. Yours sincerely,

H. STREATLEY, LT. COL.

"Gascoigne," said the colonel, turning to his adjutant, "send a bicycle orderly with this at once, will you? And see that young Fitzgerald sweats for the next fortnight."

"Very good, sir," replied the adjutant, and went forth to make it so.

III.

Laureltine, a fortnight later, sat in her little white bed with the pink hangings twisting a letter thoughtfully between her fingers. It was from Ronnie; it described certain measured words of praise by the colonel, respecting No. 16—the writer's—platoon, and claimed the privilege of paying the agreed stake to his fair correspondent. A sense of righteousness also made him enclose, with his humble duty, six pairs of gloves, size six.

Laureltine glanced at them casually. They were evening gloves, even white kid, at about eighteen shillings a pair.

"I hate the little brute, but gloves are always gloves," she murmured, and thrust them into a drawer. She caught sight of herself in a glass and made a grimace. It was at the thought of being kissed by Ronnie.

"Mother," she said gently, over a cup of tea, "shall we ask Colonel Streatley and Ronnie Fitzgerald to dinner? I've got something to settle with both of them, and it seems simpler to kill off the two at once."

"Why, certainly," agreed Laureltine's mother, with whom Colonel Streatley had privily talked over the whole palaver. "There's some excellent cold mutton, and perhaps you'd like to make an apple tart yourself? The colonel was talking only the other day about demo-

lition. Let's send them a note and ask them for to-morrow night."

Accordingly, in due course, the colonel's car drew up outside Laureltine's mother's cottage, disgorging that gallant officer and the least of his subalterns. They ate neither cold mutton nor apple tart concocted by Laureltine. They enjoyed a good dinner.

Afterward, Laureltine's mother entertained the colonel, while Laureltine wandered gardenwards with Ronnie.

"They go that the compact may be fulfilled," murmured the colonel solemnly.

"How Laureltine will make him suffer for that kiss!" exclaimed her mother. "Ah, colonel, men are never brought so low as when they believe they're conquerors! When actually they do conquer, they're never allowed to know, poor things."

Meanwhile, Laureltine and her worshiper wandered out into the night. She seemed lost in thought. Ronnie trembled while he triumphed. At last those lips were to be his! Then he would declare his love. He would say—

"Mr. Fitzgerald," broke in Laureltine's cool, clear voice, "I understand from your letter I've won my bet. Therefore, you owe me a kiss. Please give it to me."

She stood in the moonlight perfectly calm and composed, offering her cheek. Ronnie seemed petrified. For a moment speech left him.

"Not like that, for Heaven's sake!" he gasped. "On your cheek, striking an attitude like some one selling cheese in a shop!"

"I'm not aware that I look like some one selling cheese in a shop, and I insist on our bargain," asserted Laureltine. "You're keeping me waiting."

Slowly, dreadfully, Ronnie advanced and pecked miserably at her roseleaf complexion.

"Now that we are quits," pursued

Laureltine, caressing the cheek with a minute handkerchief, "I will explain matters. I endured this masquerade solely for the sake of Colonel Streasley, who begged me to try to make a man of you. That's the only reason why I agreed to your extremely vulgar suggestion, Mr. Fitzgerald. You have now shown you can be of some faint use in the army, and I can leave the rest to your colonel. As far as I'm concerned, you cease to exist. Is that clear?"

"But, Laureltine, I love you. I want you more than anything. I——"

"Just for once, I will consider my own feelings," said Laureltine. "You're mother's guest to-night, so I must be polite to you. After to-night, please never bother me again. I should dislike you if I took enough interest in you to go to so much trouble."

On the way home, the colonel found his subaltern very silent. Being capable of seizing the right moment, he gave the youth a whisky and soda in his own quarters. They drank silently.

"Ronnie," said the colonel after a time, "she seems to have given you a proper knockout, but you asked for it. I'm afraid I was partly in the conspiracy, but I wanted you to be saved, and between us we've saved you. Don't take it too hard. Laureltine is a little devil, but she's the right sort. Take an old man's advice and never ask for kisses. Good night, and buck up. We live, and with luck we learn. I prophesy you will have tea with Laureltine yet again, unless you're all sorts of an ass."

Mr. Fitzgerald became very sulky for a moment. Then he smiled manfully.

"Good night, sir, and thank you. You're no end of a prophet!" he said.

"Good night, my boy," repeated the colonel.

In the cottage they had left, Laureltine talked with her mother.

"I hope the colonel's satisfied," she

said. "I know he told you all about it, mother. He's one of those simple dears who would."

"Did you have any mercy on Ronnie?" asked Lauretine's mother.

"None whatever. He's too good a boy to spoil."

Lauretine's mother nodded her emphatic approval.

"I quite agree with you. I wish people would give up calling us heartless. After all, we do know our own business, and men are our business," she observed judiciously.

Next Month: "With the Honors of War," concluding story of series.



BALLADE OF HIS LADY'S IMMORTALITY

O SUMMER day, all hot with bee and rose,
Heavy with honey, like a cup of gold,
Abrim with the wild wine that overflows
The limits of the world! Ah, love, we hold
The cup a while and drink, as they of old
Before us, drinking thus, 'neath the same sky;
As we, they laughed, then fell asudden cold—
But you are far too beautiful to die.

Fair face, wherein Life's color softly glows,
Flower that, within your petals, fold on fold,
Hoards from the sun your sanctuary snows,
Dazzlingly hid from lovers overbold;
As the young moon, high up above the wold,
Grants but a gleam of whiteness to the eye
That fain would have her silver all unfold—
But you are far too beautiful to die.

The moon will set, the fairest flower close,
This summer day be like a screed up-rolled;
Or soon or late, the lingering glory goes;
Or soon or late, the noblest tale is told.
Yours is a loveliness too manifold
For sacrilegious Death even to deny;
All other fairness turns to fragrant mold—
But you are far too beautiful to die.

Envoi

Princess, fear not the passage to behold
Of Beauty, living but in song or sigh;
For others must the passing bell be tolled—
But you are far too beautiful to die.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



The Ice Maid

By Leona Dalrymple

Author of "Diane of the Green Van,"
"The Mistletoe Bough," etc.



DAREDEVIL cousins, those Morton boys, painting yards and yards of canvas up into dreams. Mrs. Schuyler Ruthven, you remember, made Dan famous in a night, and by the time we who bowed in sycophantic homage to Mrs. Ruthven's will followed her limousine to the Morton garret in the noisy bend of the Third Avenue L, the studio was no longer just a garret. "The Garret" people called it, and Dan had unleashed within it his barbaric instinct for color, even painting gorgeous fruity blobs of it into the filigree around his lamps.

Why, when his ship had come in laden with portrait commissions and a cargo of gold, he lingered in Third Avenue, we did not know until later. Only there could Ned afford to live with him. Ned, you see, had not "arrived." We were to know in time what Dan insisted—that Ned *was* a better painter—but then all of us were dazzled by Dan's recklessness in line and color and a subtle trick of brush flatery that made his pictures sell.

Victoria Kemble, looking very lovely, was one of the guests at the first tea Dan had in the Garret. I remember overhearing a bit of conversation about her, above the tinkle of teacups, the hum of art talk, and the intermittent roar of the elevated trains.

"Who's the girl, Ben?" a man's voice asked behind me. "The girl with the

gray-green eyes and the incandescent skin. No, no—the girl in the green gown."

"Victoria Kemble, Peter Kemble's niece. Dan's painting her. Like a tall green lily, isn't she?"

"Lily! My young friend, I, as a sculptor, would chip your lily, gown and all, out of polar ice. An ice maid with a beautiful, cold, perfect face. I like more color in a face myself."

"More color!" the other gasped. "Man alive, look at her hair! It's like a soft mist of fire. And her eyes! They're neither gray nor green nor black—just a curious mingling of the three. Color enough there for any face, a color subtlety that baffles you. Give her more and she'd be too vivid and intense. The girl's an amazing combination of fire and ice. She simply hasn't found herself. Dan's mad about her."

"If one may judge by the look in Ned's eyes——"

They moved on, chatting, to a group around an easel, while I stared at Dan and Ned in some apprehension. I knew very well that pair of daredevil bohemians had no place in the ambitious plans for Victoria's future. Victoria could marry where she chose. Already her exquisite beauty, cold or otherwise, was a power in the world of fashion.

I don't suppose any one realized that winter how much Victoria saw of the

Morton boys. Ned, too, painted her—with exquisite delicacy—though at the time all of us agreed that it was just—not Victoria. The essential sophisticated tricks of self-possession, inscrutability, and grace that Victoria's aunt had taught her had escaped his keen discernment. We did not then know what other nameless trait of hers his portrait lacked, or what it had that Victoria had not.

The climax of the winter came at the costume dance at the Painters' Club. I know, for Victoria told me about it afterward. Nations and centuries, mingled in a barbaric riot of color, danced that night in the club galleries.

Dan was in a wild mood. He had carried off Victoria, and if, with the rakish strum of the orchestra in his ears, he paid reckless court to her, one cannot blame him. She *was* lovely, throat and shoulders gleaming pearl white above the soft green drapery of a sea nymph.

"And where is Ned?" Victoria wondered. "Isn't he coming?"

"Yes." Dan danced her the length of the gallery and back, his eyes a gay caress. "Ned, *chérie*," he added lightly, "is, ten to one, the irritated center of an army of Third Avenue kids who've never seen a Robin Hood. He hates—taxis."

Victoria's eyes were sympathetic.

"Why do you stay there?" she exclaimed. "Is it—is it—Ned?"

Dan colored under the approving suspicion in her eyes.

Ah, lovable, harebrained Dan! How much it bothered him that success and fame ignored that well-loved cousin, painting in his garret! It pleased him all at once to check Victoria's tendency to pity with a tale of pure romance, unaware that Fate was marching at his heels.

"Ned!" he lied gallantly. "Why, heart of mine, the beggar's rich! He

likes to live in the bosom of the masses."

The light, the music, the color and rhythm—and Victoria's lively mood of interest, he owned later—went to his head and filled him with an irresponsible surge of hilarity. Besides, Dan, eager for Victoria's presence at the Painters' Ball, had contrived to reach the telephone ahead of Ned, and the fact was on his conscience. Dan's conscience and his instincts always were at war. Now the picture of Ned providently striding in costume through a jeering mob of urchins struck home to him the fact that fame and money—and to-night, at least—Victoria were his. He salved his conscience with an irresponsible panegyric.

He wove delicious tales in which Ned, by inheritance, fairly shone. He talked of Irish ancestors who had, if you please, been, romantically, ragged kings. Yes, there was in Ireland that very minute a castle and some green hills that belonged to Ned, and a goblin with a stone-colored beard. An old, old man had been killed on the foundation stone, and from his blood, stirred into the mortar, had sprung the goblin destined to guard the gray old castle walls forever. The truth of it was that Ned—modest old Ned, who chose to paint in a garret—owned Irish lands, treasure he'd dug up himself, and even some haunted jewels!

A galloping tale! Almost it seemed to tell itself. And it was easy to float out of one's depth watching the unaccustomed warmth and sparkle in Victoria's wonderful eyes.

The music stopped to a patter of applause. A bag of confetti, hurled by a Robin Hood keen for conquest, showered in a cascade of color upon Victoria's hair and gown. Bright bits of green and yellow and red flecked her shoulders. She shook them free, laughing, and found the Robin Hood beside her. It was Ned, eager for the

encore. Dan wished them Godspeed and stole a partner from an unsuspecting friend.

Pages now were tossing rolls of paper ribbon to the dancers. Ned shot the colored strings in all directions and became a target in return. Streamers, tangling, trailed from garlands overhead, crisscrossed over shoulders, joined distant dancers with carnival chains, and fell at last to the rotary shuttle of many feet, to be interwoven promptly into rainbow nests.

Ned found his feet pleasantly shackled to Victoria's, and with his powerful arms swung the girl free. There was an unfamiliar sense of surrender about her to-night, and his heart leaped to his eyes. He had made a resolution, but Victoria colored at his touch, the quick pressure of his hand went unchided, her eyes were gentle—and Ned forgot the resolution. He danced the length of the gallery with his cheek against her hair.

"At least," he said, "you're here. That's everything."

She did not pretend to miss his meaning.

"Ned," she said, "why, oh, why didn't you call me up in time?"

"I meant to, Victoria. I did call you up Thursday, and your aunt said you were lunching at the Ritz. Then I called the Ritz and you had gone—"

"But Thursday!"

Yes, it had been late, Ned knew. He could not tell her why. Luckily, at the last minute, he had found an old shopkeeper, accustomed to the discriminating patronage of artists, who rented costumes at five dollars in convenient contrast to the uptown demand for twenty. Besides, Dan had reached the telephone first.

"Ben Devlin's car is outside," he said irrelevantly.

"Yes?"

"Let's motor the next dance."

"Ned!"

"You'd rather dance?" he asked.

"No, it isn't that—"

"And Ben's big coat is down in the cloak room. He never minds. I'll leave word for him at the desk."

He was piloting her swiftly through the throng at the door. Ahead, through the windows, there was moonlight, a sense of wind, a tracery of tree boughs.

The fever of his impulse was hypnotic. Victoria felt the need of sanity—and ignored it. Excitement burned brightly under the dark of Ned's skin. He was daredevil enough to dismiss with a shrug the irregularity of kidnapping Dan's guest in Ben Devlin's car. The heat, the lights, the color all at once had palled; he craved the reality of quiet.

A page sped down the steps to the cloak room and returned with an armful of coats. A moment later, the swing doors shut off the sound of music. They were alone in wind and moonlight.

Ben's runabout stood at the curb with lights dimmed, a robe over the radiator. Ned rummaged for the key and unlocked the switch.

"Button the coat up tight around your throat, Victoria," he said. "The wind's sharp. Here, the button's here. Let me do it. What about your hair? Won't it blow?"

"I'm afraid it will. If it's the car Dan borrows—"

"It is!"

"Then there's a veil in the side pocket. He says he keeps it there—in the hope of emergency."

Ned explored the nearest pocket, remarking dryly that he was glad to supply the emergency. The veil was there. He tucked the robe about her feet with frank tenderness, drew on Ben's gauntlets, and climbed in. Her last misgiving, Victoria said, vanished as Ned went easily into high gear and settled back with a sigh of content, whistling softly under his breath.

A castle! Lands and wealth! Royal ancestors beside whom Sammy Ruthven's *Mayflower* genesis paled into insignificance! No, even Aunt Eleanor, who chose to alter the proverb of the stitches and proclaim that a marriage in time save nine steps up the social ladder, could not scold. Victoria caught her breath, startled at the passionate kindling of hope and relief in her heart.

Lights chained endlessly ahead. Ned turned into the Park and found the curving boulevards patched gloriously with moonlight and shadow. Their silence was telepathic. Meeting her eyes, Ned smiled, whimsical and tender.

"Victoria," he said gently, "I don't have to say it, do I? I think you know to-night how much I care."

I can imagine her face—vivid and wistful, her eyes starlike behind their black fringe of lashes. There was surrender in their look.

"You took so long in coming to-night!"

"And you thought I didn't care! Lord!"

Ned carried her hand to his lips. Sharply conscious of her voice above the wind that came for a moment in a gust, he bent his head to listen. She was talking nervously. She hadn't minded waiting when he was late—not after a while. Dan had been interesting. Why, pray, hadn't Ned himself ever told her of the Irish castle, the ragged kings, and the haunted jewels?

Ned preemptorily brought the car to a standstill and drew up the emergency lever with a jerk.

"Say it again, Victoria!"

Wide-eyed, she obeyed.

"Interesting!" said Ned briefly.

The girl looked startled.

"Last night in the studio," mused Ned, "an Irish poet was telling folklore tales. He must have fired Dan's fancy. I'll be sandbagged yet," he added, "and made to sit on a throne

for the rest of my life. How can they let me frivol around so, unattended, when Ireland may come into its own and need its hereditary king? Victoria, Dan's been romancing. He's a madcap liar when he starts."

"The ragged kings, you mean?" Victoria smiled, lightly discarding—to her—the least essential.

"The only Morton kings that I recall," said Ned grimly, "are in the studio—in a pack of cards. And only three at that. We never have a perfect pack."

Victoria glanced uncertainly at his face. No humor, simply deep disgust.

"One must have ancestors, of course," conceded Ned. "The custom's so inexorable. I regard my own existence as proof that I did have some. That's about the only indisputable detail I can supply. They may have been Irish. Certainly they were less royal than ragged."

"But the castle!"

"Dan's an artist, Victoria. His aërial architecture would be bound to be good."

"And the goblin?"

"Wasn't our goblin," said Ned stubbornly. "No Morton ever owned a goblin. He couldn't feed him. And the jewels must have been haunted by a demon of invisibility." He broke off, frowning and annoyed. "Was there anything else?"

She told him all. Her fire was gone, her gentleness constrained.

"So I dug up some chests of treasure from under the castle!" Ned whistled softly, then turned and caught her hands. "Victoria, I brought you out in Ben's car to-night because I wanted to ask you to marry me. I never felt—until to-night—that I might dare," he went on, splendidly boyish and eager. "I'm afraid of your aunt. We all are—even Dan. But something about you to-night—gave me hope."

She turned away from the joyous faith in his face. It hurt.

"Dear, I haven't a castle and kings and chests of Spanish doubloons. I've a lot of love for you, and a limited income until my ship comes in. Do you mind if I tell you that, sitting here with the peace of the trees ahead, you make me think of dusk and lilacs and a cottage? I don't know why. Victoria!"

The exquisite pallor of her face made him wonder. Her lashes were wet. The wistfulness of his enthusiasm, his boyish honesty—his dream—his faith—

A limousine rolled by, and Victoria caught her breath sharply. It was a reminder of the reality of luxury. Aunt Eleanor was right; one must have—money. If one loved luxury, one must either work for it or marry it, and men paid better for a woman's beauty than for a woman's work. A penniless painter! Dusk, lilacs, and a cottage! Preposterous, after Aunt Eleanor's masterful economies to clothe her—exquisitely—for the hunt.

"It's colossal, I know"—Ned's voice was tinged with panic—"the sacrifice I'm asking. You've had so much. But I suppose, deep down in my heart, I'm a rank sentimentalist. Every man is. To me, no sacrifice seems too big when you're reaching out for the fullness of life. After all, perhaps the fullness comes only through sacrifice."

But Victoria's moment of hesitation had vanished. She drew gently away from him, her face white and flower-like.

"I'm sorry, Ned! I—I can't marry you. No! No! Don't ask me! I—I don't think I can say it—now."

"I shan't ask you to tell me that you don't care—enough," he said slowly. "It must be that. I'm sorry."

He knew by her face that she did care. He remembered the whirl of confetti ribbon and the tender gayety

of her mood. He had danced with his cheek against her hair. He remembered the warm yielding of her hands, the caress in her eyes. And after the first flurry of bewilderment, he remembered with a shock the castle, the ragged kings, and the buried treasure. His mouth hardened.

Victoria drew the fur of Ben's collar closer. She was again the critical sculptor's lily chipped from polar ice, beautiful, colorless, cold. The ice had won. The hour of fire was over.

With a quiet air of finality, Ned released the emergency brake and snapped on the switch. His inscrutable silence, his self-control, maddened her.

"Ned, please!" she choked, very white. "You must say something—"

If he had spoken his thought at that moment, it would have been to voice his dazed wonderment that her face was so delicate and lovely. Self-centered? Mercenary? It couldn't be!

"Women, I suppose," he said after a while, little guessing how tensely she had waited for the sound of his voice in the wind, "live more among illusions than men. But every man has some illusion, usually about women, to which he clings. It hurts to have it crumble." He flushed hotly at the memory of the dusk and the lilacs.

Victoria put her hand on his arm.

"I'm tired, Ned. Will you drive me home? You can take Ben's coat with you—can't you?—and send a page up with my cloak. I can't go back."

"I'm sorry," he said. "It's my fault. I've spoiled the dance for you. I shouldn't have spoken. Victoria, I think I like best the girl who danced with me in the chains of confetti."

"Ned," she said hurriedly, very close to tears, "if—if only I could make you understand!"

"I'm afraid," he said quietly, "that I understand—too well."

His tone puzzled her. He drove the

rest of the way in silence. Victoria, with her heart pounding nervously and her throat dry, longed miserably to justify what in his eyes she knew could not be justified. If, but for a moment, he could have the pitiless vision of her eyes! Ned turned out of the Avenue and stopped at the apartment hotel her aunt considered fashionable, quiet, and prudent. The liveried arm of an attendant was fumbling at the catch of the door beside her before she found courage to break the silence.

"You'll make my peace with Dan, Ned?"

"Assuredly."

She left the car, longing passionately to drive away with him again, to make him see how integral a part of her life were the things he undervalued. Then she bade him good night and went hurriedly up the steps, her butterfly life tumbled into disorder by a sickening memory of the faith she had seen in Ned's eyes before the illusion had crumbled.

It was no lack of intelligence that had made Victoria a butterfly. Life had offered her the chance, and she had taken it gladly. But now her intelligence was doomed to be her torture.

She went to her room in wild revolt. Its soft rose colors failed to soothe. The shaded lights, diffusing an atmosphere of indolence and comfort, the monogrammed linen of the opened bed, the dainty lace of the night dress Thérèse had laid beside her pillow, even the heavy silver on the dressing table, gave point to the girl's rebellion. For the first time in her careless, sheltered life, she was passionately resenting the single aim of her training—to please. She danced well, talked well, and dressed well—the social essentials—for whom? The economic masters of the world, the eligibles like Sammy Ruthven, who held dominion over the needful purse. Victoria, strangely at

war with the servitude of luxury to which she clung, resented the cool, appraising masculine eye and sickened. By virtue of what did they stare—and demand?

There was one sort of expense for a marriageable daughter, she knew, that no New York mother of her set counted in vain, no matter what sacrifice it entailed. It went to fashionable shops, exclusive milliners, corsetières, modistes, and a shadowy throng of beauty-making underlings. To enhance at any cost! To exploit! Why must she live merely to please? What if Ned—what if any man—gave hours and hours and hours of thought to appearance and to nothing else! Preposterous! She was seeing it all with Ned's eyes. New and inexplicable forces were driving her to a vague accounting.

All at once her aunt's terrible economy to make possible a certain sort of extravagance assailed her with a sense of guilt and complicity. In other cities, she knew, her uncle would be rich. Here, knowing people with so much more, forced into rivalry with them by her aunt's ambition, he wasn't. After all, what right had she to luxury that exacted any sort of sacrifice? Her uncle paid willingly—Peter Kemble loved his brother's child as he would have loved his daughter—but what did she give in return? Her beauty? To her aunt, whose ambitious eyes were calculating and intelligent and fixed eternally upon the social ladder, she was a promise of interest on investment, and that promise she must fulfill brilliantly. In a sense, the obligation brought relief.

At first, in a panic of defense, her self-exoneration was instinctive. She saw herself a victim. But when, in penitential mood, she strove valiantly to consider a life shorn of the exquisite essentials to her comfort, the charm of Ned's lilac cottage was fleeting. Vic-

toria shivered, self-convicted, and went to bed. If only she might keep it all and Ned, too! That sent her face into the pillow, white and wet.

She was still awake when, a little later, her aunt rapped lightly on her bedroom door and came in, aggressively handsome in black and silver.

"Thérèse said you came in early, Victoria."

"My head ached a little, Aunt Eleanor, but it's better now."

"I'm glad of that because I want you to go to the suffrage luncheon with me to-morrow. I meant to speak of it to-night at dinner and forgot. We want as many as possible of the younger women who are pretty."

The door closed. Victoria wearily considered her aunt's brand of fashionable suffrage. Aunt Eleanor was suffragist enough to resent the subjection of her sex, but she was also Eve enough to cling to the age-old wiles. It was all very difficult to understand. Then, remembering a new gown of velvet and fur that looked extraordinarily well with her soft, bright hair, Victoria gave herself up half-heartedly to a favorite habit of visualizing in advance her entrances. But, dramatizing her arrival at the suffrage luncheon, she extracted less comfort than usual from the eyes that followed her.

The Kembles went that week to Hot Springs. Of Dan and Ned Victoria heard no word. Later she knew that Ned had left town, having quarreled with Dan. And Dan was sulking.

Hot Springs, to Victoria's aunt, proved happily the scene of fruition. There, aflame with ambition, she deftly tightened the silken noose that, months before, she had flung at Sammy Ruthven. Money he had, you see, and ancestors, and Sammy's wife would be in time the leader of the most exclusive set in America.

Victoria returned to New York engaged to Sammy Ruthven. One letter,

I know, came from Dan, a bitter flaunting of his love for her—then, like Ned, he, too, dropped out of sight. From then on something new and unfamiliar lay in Victoria's face; always, now, it was white and flowerlike and restless. Faint shadows of discontent brooded in her eyes. Peter Kemble, who had come to accept with a sigh her trained sparkle and baffling composure, found her timid and gentle. Her wanness bothered him. She came, curiously, to look like Ned's portrait.

What bothered Victoria's aunt infinitely more was her tendency to spend long hours in the studio of Trina Vedder, a penniless slip of a girl painter who lived in Greenwich Village. Victoria had never before chosen to make a girl her friend, and Trina was a friend of the Mortons.

The Kembles went early to Bar Harbor.

I have read a letter Victoria wrote from there to Trina Vedder:

And so, Trina dear, you're engaged! And happy! How nice that is! And how nice of you to tell me when it's still a secret! Of course I'll help you pick your clothes, the minute I get back.

Trina, it was dear of you to write me that I know more about clothes and how to wear them than any woman of your acquaintance. But oh, I wish—I wish I knew something else besides! I'm tired of smiles and spangles. I think I'd like to roll up my sleeves and scrub a cottage floor, cut lilacs in the dusk and put them in a bowl on the table, and wear a white apron!

It's curious, Trina. I seem to be trembling on a fence, with hands clutching to pull me back and hands clutching to pull me forward, and what I think—I don't know. Uncle—dear, unfeministic human!—says I'm the victim of social revolution, with the echo of tradition in my ears, a panic of reaction all around me, and the vivid, restless electric foreboding of reconstruction to come. We talk a great deal lately. He says I'm the woman in transit—God help her!—with the voices of the past chaining me and the voices of the future calling me to break the chains. And he blames suffrage. Aunt Eleanor, you know, did drag me about with her a great deal to suffrage meetings. Odd, Trina,

uncle's really a better suffragist in his heart than Aunt Eleanor. He's just perverse and hates the name.

But it isn't suffrage that's seething in me. I'm just tired and nervous, and want awfully to be a gypsy. I like your bohemia. I want to be myself—not merely a formal adjunct to some man's chivalry.

Remember the portrait Ned painted of me? Why did he paint something into my face that I feel now? Was it a painter's miracle of vision and foresight? When I look at it, I want to cry, for the face looks precisely the way I feel.

My warmest hope for you, dear. You must—
—you will be happy.

VICTORIA.

P. S.—Have you heard from Ned? Where can he be?

Something warm and indefinable in the letter, isn't there?—a touch of wistfulness. Well, Ned had painted wistfulness into her face, less of self and more of tenderness. It was the softer something Victoria needed to make her beauty perfect.

No one knows how things would have turned out if Victoria had not been in Trina's studio when Dan's tragic letter came. Ned was in a border hospital, the victim of a murderous Mexican assault, and the doctors feared he could not live. Dan was with him, and would stay with him until—

But here Victoria, who had dropped limply upon the couch, her face colorless and frightened, fainted for the first time in her life. When, in Trina's kind, relentless hands, she had weathered through to consciousness and trembled bravely to her feet, something snapped, and the girl who had strained through months of unhappy revolt flung herself on her knees by the couch and buried her face in the cushions, every conventional instinct of her training lost in a primitive upheaval. Her passionate hysteria drove Trina out of the studio with her hands over her ears. It was impossible, however, not to hear that agonized voice, sobbing out its incoherent tale of struggle and surrender. Trina marveled. What was the singular power of that

faith in Ned Morton's eyes that had driven Victoria into the depths and started her climbing?

"Victoria, please!" begged Trina, her wet cheek pressed against the girl's bright hair. "Don't cry so!"

"I—I drove him away!" sobbed the tormented girl. "I drove him away! If I hadn't, he wouldn't have gone to Mexico! And it's my fault. And if he dies—it's my fault! And I love him better than anything else in the world!"

But when the first wild storm of anguish was over, she rose, quiet, but resolute.

"Trina, I—I'm going to Mexico—to-night."

"Victoria!"

"What did you do with my hat?"

"It's probably behind the couch," said Trina, foraging. "Here it is. Straighten your hair, dear."

"I'm going home," gulped Victoria, "to have it out with Aunt Eleanor."

Trina glanced doubtfully at the hands that, shaking, pinned the hat to Victoria's ruffled hair.

"I'm going with you," she decided. "You're all in. No, don't fret, Victoria. I'll stay downstairs in the car and you can come back with me to dinner."

The limousine went swiftly through the November sleet, Victoria crouched in silence in the corner. Her fingers, slender, cold, and nervous, clung to Trina's hand as if, needing courage, she sought human contact.

"Trina," she said, as the limousine drew up at her aunt's hotel, "if I'd ever known girls like you—I—I could not have sent Ned away."

The vehemence of her resolution bore her to her aunt's dining room in a curious oblivion to the details of her going. She halted in the doorway, with a faint, shocked sense of having reached a dreaded goal. The scent of flowers, the glint of silver, the faces frozen ludicrously at the sight of her

pale, agonized face, struck her dumb with terror. How could she crash eruptively into that quiet, commonplace dinner hour with this tragic resolution in her heart?

"Aunt Eleanor," she flung out desperately, "I'm going away!"

"Otto," Aunt Eleanor said formally to the stolid German at her elbow, who had been unobtrusively serving dinner, "please go. Miss Kemble is ill."

Otto drifted obsequiously away through a pall of silence.

"Victoria," demanded her aunt, "are you mad? How dare you burst out in that manner? Do you want Otto gossiping with the hotel waiters?"

"I don't care!" said Victoria, sniffing and searching for her handkerchief. "If he wants to shout it out in the lobby, Aunt Eleanor, it's all the same to me. I'm through caring about anything but Ned Morton——"

Aunt Eleanor gasped.

"And I want you to know," went on the girl in a choking voice, "that I'm going away to ask him to marry me. He's been hurt, and it's my fault. And Sammy Ruthven can go to the—devil!"

Almost, at that sobbing reversion to the vernacular, Peter Kemble smiled. But his wife's blazing, scandalized eyes sought to stab decency into the frantic girl in the doorway.

"I—I don't care, Aunt Eleanor!" sobbed Victoria. "I'll swear if I want to! I'm tired of Sammy's bald head and his tubby stomach and his ancestors. I don't care if he did have a grandfather and I didn't. He doesn't look it. He looks like a dollar mark without any hair. I'm so darned sick of the *Mayflower* that I—I wish a German submarine had torpedoed it before everybody on board began to have descendants to brag about them. There's no use glaring at me, Aunt Eleanor! I'm tired of smiling and dressing for men who have money and grandfathers.

I'd rather scrub for a living. And my heart hurts and I might as well say it all now. I don't want money. I don't want ancestors. I just want to live in a cottage with lilacs——"

Her shuddering sobs made her incoherent.

"Victoria!" The dreadful majesty of that cold voice filtered through even Victoria's desperate invincibility. Peter Kemble owned long afterward that he thought wryly of Kipling and the female of the species. "Sit down!"

Victoria obeyed, straightened her hat, and stared unflinchingly into her aunt's domineering gaze.

"And this," said Mrs. Kemble, grimly reminiscent, "has been brewing for months!"

Victoria did not trouble to deny it. She wiped her eyes.

"It began, Aunt Eleanor," she said unsteadily, "when Ned asked me to marry him, and I—I wasn't just the sort of girl I could see he thought I was. And I wanted to be. I wanted to live up to his faith in me. And I will! I will! I will!"

At her wild sobbing, Peter Kemble turned pale and rose.

"Victoria!" he said gently.

"Peter," his wife cut in in peremptory tones of command, "kindly leave her to me."

"She is my brother's child," said Peter Kemble, whose policy of peace at any price had tied his tongue for many years. "I want to see her happy. And, by God, I will!"

Mrs. Kemble changed color, but her insolent stare was tinged with scorn.

"Don't be coarse," she said, her lip curling. "If she knew where her happiness lay, I should be the first to help her get it, but she doesn't."

"I do!" said Victoria.

Mrs. Kemble ignored the spurt of rebellion.

"All of it, Peter, comes of that wild bohemian crowd. Since she met the

Morton boys, she's cared for nothing else."

"They're God's own people," flung out Victoria rebelliously, "and my friends and I like them, and your old *Mayflower* people run after them and envy them——"

"You yourself, Eleanor," reminded Peter Kemble coldly, "brought the Morton boys here because the Ruthvens were chasing Dan. I liked them myself, and I rarely fall for the kind you bring here. If Victoria wants to marry Ned Morton, she shall!"

Victoria's face quivered.

"He may not want me now, Uncle Peter."

"Where is he, dear?"

"Texas—in a hospital. He may—may die." Her voice broke in a big heartbroken sob. "I—I'm going to him."

He glanced at her pityingly.

"Poor child!" he said. "My poor Victoria!"

At the kindness in his voice, Victoria caught her breath and sobbed aloud.

Peter Kemble went hurriedly across the room to her, his eyes wet and kind; and the girl, in a panic of grief and collapse, ran wildly to the shelter of his arms, crying her heart out upon his shoulder.

"Oh, Uncle Peter," she choked shudderingly, "suppose—suppose he dies!"

"If she goes to him," flung out Eleanor Kemble imperiously, "after my plans and my—my sacrifices and my economy, I never want to see her again! It's black ingratitude! I've done as much for her, Peter, as I could have done for your daughter."

"And my daughter, I trust, would have fought through as splendidly to salvation as Victoria has! For the love of God, Eleanor," he added impatiently, "be just! What you did, you did for yourself, and you know it. Victoria's beauty was a promise. She

was slated to climb with you hanging around her waist. For that you smothered her very girlhood in artificiality. You wanted to herd with the Ruthven set. You wanted to forget that my grandfather was a lumberjack. He was, nevertheless—a tough old prince of honesty with the bark on. I hope to Heaven your grandfather did nothing worse! Victoria is at liberty to go and marry Ned Morton if her heart is set upon it. And she's at liberty to return when she chooses."

"If she goes," said Eleanor Kemble, fighting furiously for the familiar entrenchment of her old, unquestioned authority, "she shall not come back!"

"That," reminded Peter Kemble dangerously, "is for me to say. This is my home. At least," he corrected himself, "it is my dwelling. Since you began your social climbing, I've not had a home. And you haven't been my helpmate in any sense of the word. You're not even a domestic necessity to my comfort. I merely support you while you discuss parasitical women. Had you borne half my burden, in any woman sort of way, I would concede your privilege to question my decision now. In this particular instance, I don't. I've paid without question for fashionable fads and a social climbing I detest. I exact, in return for that, the right to a decision now."

Eleanor Kemble gasped and stared.

"You're wondering, I suppose, how a man who professed to hate suffrage can talk it now, and how a woman who professes it can find in it a foe. I hate your brand of suffrage because it's farcical. Mine isn't. I grant a woman the right to live her own life in the way she chooses. I grant her the right to marry the man of her choice. I detest the kind of pandering subjection you teach even while you're publicly resenting it. I rebel with Victoria at the vulgarity of your woman hunt——"

"And I—I don't want to come back!" choked Victoria, turning to her aunt. "If I can't marry Ned, I'm going to earn my own living, posing for the painters I know. It's a lot more honorable than selling yourself to a—*a Mayflower* man you don't love."

Eleanor Kemble had but one recourse—she fainted, and so obtained the limelight and a much-needed recess. And thereafter, her face hard and inflexibly handsome, she issued minute commands relative to cushions, smelling salts, and a doctor, which Peter Kemble quietly, by force of custom, obeyed.

Victoria packed, wept into her suitcase, and thought of the five hundred dollars she had inherited from a great-aunt. It was all she had in the world. No, not quite all—though she thought so then—for Peter Kemble had slipped a check into her handbag that made her gasp.

Downstairs Trina waited with her eyes upon a wrist watch.

At five minutes past eight, Peter Kemble convoyed his niece to the limousine and bade her Godspeed, his eyes wet. And when, after many hours of baffling silence that his wife sought in vain to wake into any sort of re-

sponse, he fell asleep in his chair by the open fireplace, Victoria, huddled by a train window, was whirling through the sleet to Ned.

Ned did not die. Ah, life is queer! It was Dan who died gallantly a month ago on a battlefield in France. Daredevil, laughing Dan! There in that Texas hospital, with Ned white-faced and content, he stared wistfully into Victoria's wet eyes and knew and smiled—and sailed away. He loved her, too.

How long ago it seems! Months lie between—months of convalescence and growing fame for Ned. There have been lilacs and a cottage, and a rosy, happy girl a thousand times lovelier than the cold, self-possessed young beauty whom Aunt Eleanor molded after a pattern of her own.

There is something else, too, for not so very long ago, the telephone rang at midnight in the Kemble apartment, and Ned's voice, nerve-racked, tense, but joyous, sang over the wire:

"Uncle Peter?"

"Yes, Ned?"

"It's all over. A boy. Name's—Dan."



THE TORCH

WHEN age draws on, and days seem sere and ashen,
The sinews flaccid and the footsteps slow,
When in the veins declines the pulse of passion,
And in the heart the ardent fires burn low;

When we feel all must needs subserve to duty,
And sometimes question faith and even truth,
May we not then, within the hand of Beauty,
See a bright torch to lead us back to Youth?

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



A Son of Belgium

By Robert W. Sneddon

IN a corner of the Place de la Monnaie, Brussels, is a comfortable tavern, which, before the war, was frequented by the officials of the general post office occupying one side of the square. There, at the midday hour, they could be seen enjoying their brune, faro, or lambic beer and puffing with great content at their ten-centime cigars. Scotch ales and German brews were on sale there, too, to attract the tourists who came to get mail at the poste restante, and on a warm summer day all kinds of accents could be heard. Madame, the proprietress, herself, had a word for each of her customers in his own tongue. English, French, German—she knew them all.

She was a comely woman of forty, Madame Lahaye, of medium height, just escaping the charge of leanness, with a slight down upon her upper lip, who wore her black dress with quite an air. She was not the innkeeper of lusty life who would have gained immortality from the brush of Teniers, Hals, or Van Ostade; if anything, she was rather reserved in manner, keeping her place and that of her clientele. A widow, they said, with one child, a boy of thirteen, still in the stage of short socks upon long legs, a bag of schoolbooks on his shoulder. Yet, in spite of madame's dignified manner, as she sat behind her latticework cash

desk in winter and at a table just outside the door in summer, her hands always busy with some piece of sewing, there was a something about her that caused a too forward postal clerk to say one day:

"For all her demure looks, I'll wager madame has known something else. A woman with eyes like that is no nun."

The old head waiter, André, overheard him, and for a week on end served the careless fellow warm beer until a recantation was made in person to madame, who looked at the offender straightly with her black eyes and then said very gently:

"That was not nice of you, my friend."

Still, in spite of the fact that no breath of suspicion was ever attached to madame's good name, there were certain indications of coquetry—the heavy gold earrings of Flemish workmanship that emphasized the smallness and the pinkness of her ears, the quality of the silk stockings and shoes that brought into prominence the fact that her feet and ankles were adorably shaped, even if not tiny, and her carefully kept and polished finger nails.

The service of the tavern was conducted successfully by André, a dried-up old fellow, with heavy feet; Mark, a younger edition, with plastered hair and a grin; and a stout Flemish girl, who

did the washing, cleaning, and other odd jobs.

When the Germans occupied Brussels, horse, foot, and artillery, generals, colonels, captains, and lieutenants, regiments of officials who had had their appointments docketed in secret pigeon-holes for years until "the Day," things were very little changed for madame. Mark, to be sure, had gone to join his colors some time before; the Flemish girl had been sent away into safety; and only André was left to raise and lower the awnings, to polish the tables and the silvered napkin holders, to water the shrubs and serve the customers, in addition to fulfilling his duties as watchdog to madame. The clientele, too, was now made up of the uniformed officials who had taken possession of the post office, and officers lodged in the Hotel de la Poste and other neighboring caravanseries.

But madame went about her business as usual. She had now become a wheel in the machinery of German efficiency. Beer was needed for its harmonious working, and so the word went forth among the comfort-loving officials of the posts and telegraphs that official favor, clemency, and protection were extended to the tavern, and the cobble square set with tables in front thereof, and the occupants in service therein, provided the beer was cool, the service civil, and the prompt payment of scores not too stringently enforced.

As usual, madame sat at her table with her sewing and her darning. What she thought of what was happening elsewhere, no one could tell from her placid face. She responded to the salutation of the masters with a quiet smile that gave no clew.

It was only when the lights were put out in the tavern, when, in the few moments before going to bed, the little company of three gathered about the table, with its white-and-red-checked

cloth, which stood in the middle of the private sitting room, that she relaxed her self-control and let the haunting terror creep from its hiding place in her brain into her eyes. Then could be seen three white faces in the candle-light—the old man's, wrinkled and brown-spotted, working nervously; the boy's with a sternness strange for one so young, a subdued fire in the eyes he had inherited from his mother; and madame's, which the guttering single candle invested with dark shadows beneath the still darker eyes. It was as if they waited each night for the tramp of heavily booted feet, the harsh, imperative summons to open, and the crushing blow of the mailed fist, still bloody with the massacre of old men, women, and children.

There was little conversation, and that little limited by tacit consent to the affairs of the tavern, and then madame, with a sigh, would rise to her feet, embrace Frans with a kiss that lingered on lips each day becoming firmer, place her hand on the shoulder of the old waiter in a caress that spoke of her affection for him, and, standing a moment at her bedroom door as if to take a last look about the silent room, would close the door softly upon the old man and the boy.

And so two years went by.

One night the two who were left in the sitting room sat silent until at last the old man tiptoed to the door, listened, and returned.

"Madame your mother is sleeping, my boy. It is time we go to bed."

"Ah, no, André! Last night you promised to tell me about the old guildsman."

"Eh! Frans Anneessens. Was it that?"

"Yes."

André leaned forward with a sly look at the doors and lowered his voice to a faint whisper:

"Well, it was during the time that

Brabant was held by the cursed Austrians under the Governor de Prié, a terrible rascal and a cruel. He was all for screwing money out of the good craftsmen of our city—just as to-day—and when they rebelled, why, he took five of those who had resisted him and his unjust taxes. Among them was a fine old man, Frans Anneessens, a turner of chairs, whom every one loved and esteemed."

"And what did they do to him, André?"

"They cut off his head in the market place, yes—near two hundred years ago. He gave his life for liberty. Ah, why am I not younger and strong?" added the old man in a fierce whisper. "We showed the Germans once before what we of Brussels could do to them—and now they are here again and we are slaves! Hush! Hefe comes the night patrol. To bed, my boy!"

And the old man blew out the candle, leaving them to grope their way to bed.

Frans clenched his fists as he lay in his room, repeating to himself over and over, as he listened to the tramp of the night patrol:

"I thank the good God I am Belgian, Belgian, of the race of Frans Anneessens, of the race of Albert, our king!"

One day madame, returning from Notre Dame du Sablon, where she had said her prayers under the watching eye of a German sentry, stopped suddenly and shrank within the shelter of a doorway as an automobile went down the steep street at a reckless pace. She had only caught a glimpse of the officer who rode in it, stiff-backed, grim-visaged, but that glance had been enough to set her heart trembling, so that it was some time before she could proceed. And when she did, the feeling of deadly nausea which came over her made her stop again and again to lean against the walls for support.

It was as if she had discovered a

deadly snake curled up in the bed of her son.

Yet when she reached the tavern, she had regained her composure. She answered the salutations of the clientele with her usual pleasant smile, and then went into her bedroom. Before the crucifix she knelt with anguished eyes, imploring pardon for her weaknesses and strength and divine protection in whatever trials might come to pass.

It was the last time she went beyond the tavern and its terrace for many a long day, and she never came out into the warm sunshine without examination of the drinkers at the tables. To add to her cares, she was disturbed by the behavior of Frans, never a talker, who seemed more taciturn than ever, yet always on the point of breaking out into angry speech. She caught him eying the chattering German officers with sullen contempt. When she spoke to him gently, he turned on her fiercely:

"And why not, *maman*? I am Belgian—and these hogs—German!"

She started back as if he had struck her in the face, and, frightened by her shrinking silence, Frans ran to her and, putting his arms about her, asked anxiously what was the matter.

She drew herself up with an effort that left her pale.

"Nothing, my son, nothing. Only you must not speak that way. Some one may hear you."

"Let them! I am not afraid!"

"Oh, but for my sake, Frans, for my sake! You must be here to protect me!"

"And I shall, *chère maman*," he assured her, with set chin and eyes ablaze with a somber passion.

"You will not go away from the tavern?" she pleaded with him. "Promise me! It is so dangerous!"

He shook his head and looked away, and she had to be content with that assurance.

One day an urgent message to go and see a sick friend came to her in the morning. She hesitated, then ordered André to take good charge of the tavern and Frans; and, the old man having given her his word, she went off.

When she came hurrying back shortly after noon, the tables outside were bare of customers. At one of them sat André, his head upon his arms. She spoke to him sharply, and he raised his head, his blinking old eyes full of tears.

"It was not my fault, madame, I swear it!" he said hoarsely. "I did my best."

She looked at him, terrified. His clothing was torn and dust-covered.

"What has happened? Where is Frans? Quick! Tell me!"

The old waiter staggered to his feet and gulped:

"They took him away, madame. I tried to stop them, and they beat me. See!"

She saw the discoloration on his bruised face and arms.

"What was it? What happened. Is my boy hurt?" she cried, looking about her with staring eyes.

"It was this way, madame. We had quite a crowd at noon, and Frans was helping me serve the officers. The poor boy was running here and there with the glasses, and in his hurry he upset a glass of lambic over the boots of a lieutenant—a young beast with a glass in his eye. Frans made his excuses, the poor boy, and bent down to wipe off the boots of the officer, and the dog—he kicked him in the mouth and laughed and said, 'The best place for a German boot.' Let me tell you all, madame. Frans drew himself up to his feet again and looked at him. Then something gave way within him. What a look he gave the Boche before he sprang at him with his naked hands!"

"But did you do nothing, you?" Ma-

dame Lahaye demanded fiercely. "I left you in charge!"

"Ah, madame," André answered piteously, "I did! I came forward—they sent me sprawling, and ——"

"Oh, my poor boy! And he fought well?"

"Like a lion, madame, but what could he do? The lieutenant was bigger, heavier than he, but Frans gave him what he deserved, what he deserved!"

"But where is Frans now?"

"They were separated, and the lieutenant had him arrested."

"They took him away—where?"

"To see the deputy governor, madame, I heard them say."

"But the fault was the officer's! My Frans did nothing but protect himself!"

"Ah, madame, they have shot hundreds of us down for even trying to take ourselves out of harm's way—aye, even when we stood by like sheep! Do you not know that the proclamation says that any one resisting the authority of an officer or soldier under arms will be shot?"

"Shot?"

"Alas, yes, madame, and——"

The old waiter's voice quavered into silence.

"What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do? Tell me, André! You are a man!"

"An old, foolish man, mistress. Sit you down. There may be some spy watching us."

He wrinkled his brows; then gave a low exclamation:

"*Dame*, I have it! Do you know the little stout German who comes here from the post office—Herr Kronen—who has charge of the official mails? He is friendly to you, madame. Do you remember the time he sent those shameless ones from the rue Persil, who came hunting in the tavern, back to their house? Go across to the post office and see him, madame. He may advise you."

"Stay there, then," and madame ran across to the post office.

A sentry barred her way gruffly, but a passing clerk recognized her and took her upstairs to Herr Kronen's department.

The little stout man looked up sharply; then his eyes opened wide.

"Unexpected pleasure, *fräulein*. Be seated. What can I do for you?"

"My son is arrested," said madame curtly, her eyes heavy with pain. "Whom shall I see about it?"

"Arrested! So!"

Herr Kronen's smiling welcome faded from his round face, and he stirred uneasily in his cushioned seat.

"What for?"

Madame told him.

"I can do nothing," the official said at last coldly, "nothing. You have read the proclamation. No! Then permit me to recommend your attention to it. It is correct."

Madame rose to her feet and looked down at him.

"Then you can give me no advice?"

He pursed his lips and fidgeted with the writing materials in front of him.

"I can give you no advice officially, no. But," he continued hastily, as she turned on her heel, "apply in person to the deputy governor, Herr Oberst Boehm."

"Colonel Boehm!"

"Precisely. And above all, do not mention my name. It is better so, eh?"

"Yes. Thank you."

She left the room hurriedly. Herr Kronen wiped his moist forehead nervously.

"Those cursed women!" he muttered to himself. "Whew! I am glad it is she, not I, that is going to see the Herr Oberst! Whew!"

André sprang to his feet as she came swiftly across the square.

"You have seen him? What did he say?"

"I am going to see the deputy governor. Wait here."

"But, madame," the old waiter faltered, "let me go! You are a woman, and those men——"

Madame Lahaye shook her head. Her eyes were aflame.

"I am not afraid, André. I shall come back unharmed—this time. Go inside and wait."

Colonel Boehm had learned, in his forty-nine years of life, that while it was sometimes costly to grant audience to a woman coming on an unknown errand, there was also a chance that something might be gained.

"What sort of a woman?" he asked the sergeant.

"Quite a lady, Herr Oberst."

"I mean looks—good-looking, eh?"

"She wore a veil, Herr Oberst."

"No chance of her carrying a pistol with her?" suggested the colonel, with a grim smile that showed misshapen teeth. "Well, if need be, I can search her myself. Stay within call. She may have some information for us, though God knows we get little of that from any of those tight-mouthed Belgians!"

Madame Lahaye was ushered into the anteroom occupied by the colonel and advanced a few steps forward to the desk lit by a single electric reading lamp on a swivel stem. Behind it she could see the impressive figure of the deputy governor in his field uniform. She stood trying to recover her composure.

"Well, you wish to see me, madame? What is your business?"

She trembled from head to foot at the sound of his voice. It seemed as if there was no communicating channel between her brain and her lips.

"Sit down. What is it? I have no time to waste."

She sat down in the chair in front of the desk.

"My son—my son——"

An endless repetition of the two

words rang through her brain, and again the impassable barrier of emotion rose in front of her effort to speak.

"Yes, yes. Your son—what of him?"

With a sudden jerk of his hand, he turned the hooded light so that its glare, like a searchlight in miniature, illumined her quivering features. Suddenly he started, leaned forward, and then slowly drew himself back against his chair.

"An unexpected pleasure to meet an old friend," he said in a harsh and constrained tone. "What can I do for you, Mademoiselle Couzens. Or you say you have a son? You are married?"

"Yes."

"And your husband?"

"Dead. Six years ago."

"Ah, you married after you left Köln, eh?"

"Yes. I—I married."

"I am happy to hear that. I fear you were not particularly happy as governess in my father's house."

Madame Lahaye bent her head.

"No," she faltered at last.

"Well, that was quite some time ago. You have had time to forget your"—he hesitated for the word—"perplexities, eh? Anyway, you can't blame me for having tried to make your life a little bit more bearable."

Colonel Boehm stroked his mustache with a sly smile.

Madame Lahaye's hands twitched in nervous clasping and unclasping. She scarcely seemed to hear what he was saying.

"Well, that's an old story. You're looking well, and—might I say so?—prosperous. You married well? A Brussels man, eh?"

"Yes."

He stared at her with narrowed eyes. The monosyllables, dragged as it were by torture from her, set his mind to

wondering. What did the woman want?

"You're in need of money, perhaps?"

"No!"

"Then what? What do you want with me? I am busy."

Something in the imperative nature of his tone loosened the bonds of her speech.

"I want my son, my son Frans."

"What in God's name have I to do with your son?" he asked abruptly.

"He was arrested to-day—this noon. He's only sixteen. He knew no better."

"At sixteen, one is a man to-day," the colonel reminded her sharply. "What has he done? Where is he? Do I know anything of him?"

"I do not know. He was taken away."

"What for? See here, if I can help you, I will."

"Oh, thank you! I thought perhaps you might. You see, he did not realize what he was doing, and, besides, it was the lieutenant's fault—his fault entirely. Frans was serving beer on the terrace—"

"Ah, you have a tavern, eh? Not a bad business."

"And when he was passing the lieutenant, he accidentally upset some beer on his boots. He bent down to wipe them, and the lieutenant kicked him in the mouth."

"Ah!" The colonel's hand came down heavily on the desk. "If that is so, it will be seen to. There are positive orders issued not to provoke conflict with the citizens of Brussels. In Louvain—well, that is different. Here we are thirty thousand garrison to five hundred thousand inhabitants. Set your mind at rest, madame. I will attend to it. I will see that reparation is made."

Madame Lahaye's eyes for the first time lost their intent stare and softened.

"You will see that he is set free?"

"Surely. What is the name?"

"Frans Lahaye."

The colonel started in his chair.

"So!" he said sharply. "So! You did not say so before."

"No. My husband's name was Lahaye."

"Um. A Belgian name, surely. Well, that makes it a little difficult, I'm afraid," he said slowly, moving the papers in front of him and collecting them into a neat pile.

"His name?" madame asked eagerly.

For a moment she seemed about to continue; then she closed her lips tightly and clenched her hands.

"No, his case. I did not connect the name with you at first. A very serious case. There is no more heinous offense than the resistance of a civilian to the superior orders of a component part of our military system. In striking an officer, he strikes my emperor."

"But he is a boy! He is only a boy! Won't you do your best for him?"

"I can do nothing, personally, now," the colonel replied coldly.

"But you are all powerful! You are the deputy governor!"

"That is so. The governor is not here just now, but I am answerable to him, and through him to my emperor. And, besides"—he hesitated and, bending over the desk, toyed with the pen he took up—"there were other offenses."

"What?"

"When he was brought before me, he embarked on a long speech. I compliment you, madame, on the oratorical powers of your son, but they were ill-judged. He had the bad taste to assail not only my own personal virtues, but also that of one much higher, as compared with a certain Frans Somebody who seems to have lost his head in more ways than one some centuries ago—another stubborn and insubordinate citizen of Brussels. When will they

learn sense, I wonder. You know what that means, madame?"

Something in the cruel suavity of his tone, succeeding to the curt harshness that had greeted her on her entry, sent a deathlike chill through her.

"I am terribly sorry, dear lady. Well, we must see what can be done."

"Thank you, thank you! Then you will free him?"

There was a knock at the door, and the sergeant who had shown her in entered with a paper which he laid on the colonel's desk, and departed again with a curious glance at the woman who sat in the chair, bent forward, her hands clasped in entreaty.

"Yes. I will try."

He idly set the paper straight in front of him.

All at once she gave a cry. Her eyes had caught the name of "Frans" in heavy black writing on the document.

"What is that—that—" she asked with a hoarse sob.

"Tut tut! Nothing! Go now!"

The colonel could not meet her eyes. He drew out his watch and uttered a deep "*Gott!*"

"What is it?" Madame Lahaye cried anxiously. She could not keep her eyes from the document.

"Ten minutes to four—German time."

"What do you mean?" she asked wildly, rising to her feet and coming forward. "What has German time to do with my son? Where is he? What have you done with him?"

The colonel turned away. He had a twinge of compunction.

"I forgot we changed the time—I am always forgetting that," he muttered. "Sorry to tell you. Frans Lahaye was shot at a quarter to four."

Madame Lahaye stumbled. Her hand fell on the edge of the desk and gripped it tightly.

"Shot! Shot!" she repeated in a high voice.

"Yes. I am sorry. It was my duty. I could do nothing else. I wished to——"

The mumbled excuses died on his lips as she leaned across the desk, the warrant of execution between them, her face rigid in a mask of scorn and hate, and moaned:

"Monster! You killed your own son!"

For a moment the two faces almost touched.

"Yes, your own son! Six months after I was discharged from your father's house, Frans was born. I scorned to tell him of my folly, of the moment of passion that made me give myself to you and your lies, of the blood that was in his veins. My husband, who loved me, knew it all. He adopted Frans as his son. Frans never

knew, and he died Belgian—do you hear me?—Belgian!"

The deputy governor of Brussels put up his hand as if to shut out the sight of her face and of the face he seemed to see behind her shoulder—the pallid face of a boy whose large dark eyes burned with a scorn, a contempt, a hate that seared into his benumbed brain. Falling back into his chair, crumpled, bent, aged inexpressibly, he muttered:

"Go! Go!"

Turning upon him, Madame Lahaye drew herself up proudly and without a word walked to the door of that room in which sat one who had killed his own son. At the door, she paused.

"You will send me the body of my son," she said quietly, and, without waiting for reply, she closed the door upon the deputy governor.



MONA MODERNA

LIKE that great lady of the Renaissance
 Who's sent her sighing poet and lovers away,
 To watch, bright-eyed and lonely, the gold day
 Blur into dark—you in your beauty glance
 From out your portrait—all that may enhance
 Your magic—velvet, lace, the white array
 Of hand and arm and shoulder, interplay
 Of eye and lip and witty brows askance.

If, debonair, you smile—yet never face
 More questions asked, more happy faiths put by;
 You've dreamed with love and challenged life a space,
 Found love—a fragrance; life—a tired cry;
 Fastidious, frank, ironic in your grace
 And bloom, you smile . . . I think you wonder why.

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



The Expert on the Other Side

By Rose Lombard

THE youngest member of the staff of Cappan & Wilder buttoned his coat briskly and prepared to leave the office, with a new air of importance. He had just stowed away the final papers and instructions for the most interesting mission in his very short business career. To-morrow he would be taking a train for New Orleans, to meet the Massachusetts man and his expert on their way to the coast.

It was a clean-cut job the firm had laid out for him. If he succeeded, it meant the sale of a good mine to a man who was amply able to pay for it. There were apparently no rocks ahead. The deal was practically made, pending only the final examination, and young Warrener's part was the easy one of merely checking up the report that a well-known mining engineer had already turned in.

There was just one fly in his ointment, and it was of this that he was thinking as he snapped the last button of his overcoat. To-morrow he would be speeding Westward. That left just one more precious evening with Marjorie Reynolds. Her visit to Mrs. Merrill would end before his return, and after she went back to Boston, what chance was there that she would not forget him altogether? How far had he progressed with her? He had to admit that he did not know. Dare he risk telling her to-night that he loved her?

Very dolefully, he decided that the risk was too great. It was just two weeks since he had met her. He had seen her exactly eight times. No girl could possibly fall in love on such an acquaintance! He would only ruin his chances forever by blurting out his confession before he at least felt sure of a warm place in her friendship.

He shuddered to think how narrowly he had missed knowing her at all. Mrs. Merrill was a friend of his mother's. She had been visiting at their little apartment, and had been leaving as he had come in, but she had turned back to call to him:

"Leland, I'm to have a little red-headed girl from Boston with me next Thursday, for a few weeks. She's a darling! She doesn't know any one here, and I'm really depending on you to make her visit pleasant!"

He had felt immensely bored. He would have to go, of course. But he didn't like them from Boston, and he certainly didn't like them little and red-headed. He liked them dark and tall and queenly.

He had gone to Mrs. Merrill's home on the Drive with a most distinct notion of the kind he did like—and the imperious Gibson lady had been literally knocked into a cocked hat five minutes after the little girl with the shy violet eyes and the red-gold hair had come into the room. Then and there

had taken place a complete somersault of Leland Warren's ideals. Suddenly he had liked them little and appealing and slight; he had liked them with small, fluttering hands, like rose petals, and unbelievably tiny white-suède-shod feet.

He had walked all the way home from Mrs. Merrill's that first night. He had had a tremendous lot of thinking to do under the stars. One of his most ironclad resolutions was tottering. Three hours before, he would have told you in a coldly impersonal way that a fellow had no right to think of marriage at twenty-three. After five or six years of building up a career—and a bank account—one might select a wife and give her a proper setting. But these young egotists who asked a girl to scrape along on a salary barely sufficient for one—Really, he had had very firm convictions on the subject!

But now he was confronted with the imperative necessity of placing, at top speed, at least a carat of crystallized carbon on the fourth finger of the loveliest girl in the world, before a hundred thousand other New York men discovered her and entered the race.

An older man might have read encouragement in the rosy flush that dyed the girl's cheeks as she turned to find him at her side a few hours later. But Leland had seen that lovely color rush to stain the soft pinkiness of her cheeks on the very first evening they had met, and Leland was a modest chap, above all things. It had not even entered his head that there might have been a precipitate falling in love on both sides.

Perhaps Mrs. Merrill was wiser. She withdrew, after the first few moments, and sat at her desk, well down the length of two rooms, with two pairs of portières half drawn between; and Leland realized in despair that his insane longing to pick his treasure up and crush her in his arms was interfer-

ing sadly with his ability to sustain an ordinary conversation, and he was in actual danger of appearing a blithering idiot before her, this last evening together.

A spirit of gloom descended upon him. He rose to say good-by a full hour earlier than necessary. He had never touched her hand before, but this was a formal leave-taking that would entitle him to that privilege.

As the fluttering little soft palm met his, he glanced down into her eyes. Something he saw sent his heart into his throat. Suddenly white lids veiled the beautiful eyes, her lower lip trembled, and when the long, dark lashes were lifted again, they were dewy with moisture.

"Marjorie!" he cried in amazement. "It isn't—it can't be you really care!"

In another moment there was a red-gold head burrowing against his heart, and the loveliest girl was trying in vain to hide a tear-stained face in the stiff folds of his coat.

"I was s-so a-afraid you were g-going 'way out there without telling me!" she sobbed.

That was the real beginning of the evening.

"It seems perfectly wonderful!" breathed Leland, an hour later. "I've seen you just nine times, and yet I've loved you a lifetime! Marjorie," he said suddenly, "Mrs. Merrill said you were an orphan. Are you perfectly free to decide for yourself—or is there some guardian whom I must see at once?"

"I've never thought of myself as an orphan," she answered slowly. "My father died when I was a baby, but I've had the dearest stepfather in the world! Mother lived only a few years after she married him, and he's been father and mother and big brother and chum and everything else to me. I've always called him daddy. But you can't see him to-morrow. He's gone to

Montreal, and is to take another long trip before he comes home. I shall write to him at once, Leland, but you'll have to wait until your return before you can talk with him."

He drew a long breath of relief.

"Well," he laughed, "I'm in hopes I shall be able to give a little better account of myself financially then. I'm due for a raise, and I imagine it'll come if I land this Massachusetts man for a purchase of the Guadeloupe Mine. I don't see how I can fall down. It's a good, clean buy—so many thousand cubic yards of dirt, worth so much a yard—and it's easy to figure the cost to handle it. Unless the expert the other side takes out is a fool or a villain, I don't see how they can turn it down."

Back at the office next morning, in a final talk with his chief, Leland found his optimism shared by the firm.

"We have every confidence in the Fancher report," Mr. Capan reassured him. "Your business will be to see that the expert Mr. Prentiss takes out makes a fair and careful examination. We trust entirely to your tact and ability to handle the situation, and if you deliver the goods," he finished smilingly, "you can count on our appreciation."

The young man spent the first day on the train in reading and rereading the firm's report.

"Just as soon as I know who the other expert is," he reflected, "I'll know where I'm at. If he's one of the regular big fellows, like Fancher, I'm not afraid of him. If he's one of that half-arrived bunch who prides himself on the number of mines he has turned down, and is a regular bear for conservatism, I'll have my work cut out!"

But on his arrival in New Orleans, young Warrener found his firm's client alone at the St. Charles Hotel.

"My man missed his train," Mr. Prentiss explained cheerfully. "He will follow at once, and reach San Diego

the day after we get there. You've been West before, of course, Warrener?"

"Born in California!" said Leland. "My grandfather was a Forty-niner, and my people have always been mining men. Dad did a few things in Guatemala. Ever heard of him?"

Mr. Prentiss shook his head.

"I've never gone in for mining before. I'm going to confess at once that you have before you a fine, large, juicy sample of the genus tenderfoot. This is the first time I've ever been west of Chicago."

"Then, whether you buy a mine or not," said Leland positively, "you are going to have an interesting trip."

When, a few days later, the train rolled into San Diego, the two had fallen into the pleasant friendliness that is often born of a cross-country companionship; and the young engineer's only anxiety lay in ascertaining the character of the man who was to represent the other side of the deal.

Several days passed, with no word from the missing expert. Prentiss, habitually good-natured, frowned a little when he found an empty letter box on the third morning. At noon young Warrener sought him out, with the delayed telegram and a thick letter addressed in a feminine hand.

Prentiss glanced at the telegram. Then, as he caught sight of the handwriting on the letter, he tucked the wire indifferently away and sat down to pursue his labyrinthine way through many closely written sheets.

If Leland, waiting impatiently, had known the handwriting of his lady-love, if he had guessed the importance, to him, of the message that kept his companion's eyes glued to the letter through a first hurried and a second leisurely perusal, he would probably have turned quite pale with anxiety.

"Now, daddy darling," the letter wound up, "you are not to jump at any

hasty conclusions. I know you'll think it's too short an acquaintance, and that we're both dreadfully young, but you must just hold it all in reserve until you've met him. And you must trust your little girl to know real gold from dross. I don't know anything about his business, or his family. I only know that he is Leland, and he is mine, and when you know him, you'll understand and know that I'm right."

The older man folded the letter, put it away, and sat wrapped in thought. When Leland recalled the telegram, Prentiss turned grave eyes on the young man and studied him silently, but still made no move to open the message which he had been impatiently awaiting for two days.

"I trust you've had no bad news, Mr. Prentiss?" Leland ventured.

The Boston man's seriousness relaxed.

"No," he smiled, "no. I think not."

He opened and read the neglected telegram, and handed it without comment to Leland, who took it in with a gasp.

"Delayed broken rail Albuquerque," the message ran. "There was four-hour wait and like fool went see Indian village. Seems I have been exposed smallpox and am in for fifteen-day quarantine. Am full of regrets and apologies to you, but absolutely helpless."

"What are we going to do about it?"

"Well," answered Prentiss, "we certainly are not going to wait two weeks more in San Diego. Can't I get a mining expert out here?"

"Yes, of course. There are some awfully well-known ones on the coast. Probably in Los Angeles, now——"

"Well, tell me for whom to send," commanded the Boston man.

"Why, Mr. Prentiss," stammered Leland, "I couldn't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Why, it wouldn't do at all," the

young man protested. "It—it wouldn't be ethical!"

"But if I request it?"

Leland grew very red.

"I—I'm afraid I—I—just couldn't. I can give you the names of a dozen men, however, with splendid reputations——"

Prentiss gazed at him meditatively.

"Now see here," he said suddenly. "I've come out to look at a mine. Your firm tells me certain things about it—amount of gravel, cost of bringing in water, and all the rest. I take my man in to look it over from the purchaser's viewpoint, and your firm sends you to see that my man sees it fairly from your side. That's right, isn't it?"

The young engineer nodded.

"Well, now, what's the use of bothering with another man at all? Suppose you examine the mine first for Cappan & Wilder, and then I engage you to turn around and examine it for me? What's the objection to that?"

"Good gracious!" gasped Leland. "Nobody ever heard of such a thing!"

"What difference does that make? You are not afraid to pick it to pieces from the buyer's standpoint, are you?"

"But my firm wouldn't consent to such a thing!" Leland protested. "It would be the most unheard of proceed——"

"You sit down, and I'll dictate a telegram to your firm!" commanded the man from Boston. "If you ask permission to expert on both sides, at my request, and they grant it, there isn't anything more for you to fuss over, is there?"

"I s-s-suppose not," agreed Leland at last, his head whirling.

An hour later, the head of a house in Nassau Street opened a telegram, read the extraordinary request it contained, stared at it, and hastily rang a bell and had his partner summoned.

Ronald Wilder read it through and smiled.

"Well, young Warrener has made a hit, hasn't he, Mac? I can't see any reason for withholding our consent," he went on thoughtfully. "As you say, the whole examination is perfunctory. And if Clement Prentiss wants to be eccentric, why, he has the right of his millions to do any odd thing that comes into his head. For myself, I think it is a very pretty compliment to the boy—after only a few days' acquaintance!"

And so Mr. Prentiss and his double-barreled expert set out alone. They achieved the overnight trip to Ensenada with comfort, on a tight little steamer. Then Leland spent a busy day, preparing for the five days' driving trip that was to follow. The next morning, he appeared in front of the hotel in a light buckboard, holding with difficulty a pair of mustang ponies that strained furiously at their bits.

Prentiss eyed the outfit rather dubiously.

"These horses are ready to walk right up that telegraph pole," Leland acknowledged. "But we need all the ginger they have. They tell me the road is awful. In fact, there's nothing but a trail to drive over. By to-night these ponies will be the meekest nags in seventeen counties. If you will trust me, I can handle them for the first few hours. After that a baby could drive them. I have a larger wagon behind," he continued, "with a Mexican driver and a Chinese cook and plenty of grub for our three weeks' trip. We can pick up Mexicans on the ground to do our panning for us."

Mr. Prentiss glanced uncertainly at the stamping ponies, then at the confident face of his young companion, and, stepping into his place, the expedition to Guadeloupe was off with a rush.

In the days that followed, Prentiss had ample opportunity to study the unconscious young man who proposed to marry his stepdaughter. During the tedious drives, over the camp fire at

night, he drew the boy out to talk first of books, then of people, then of more intimate things. And when, at sundown on the fifth day, they came within sight of Guadeloupe camp, the older man had sounded young Warrener to the depths, and found nothing that gave rise to any anxiety on his part for Marjorie's happiness.

As they approached the camp, there was a light burning in the window of a little shack, the only building on the place, and as they drew nearer, they could discern a Mexican woman bending over a cookstove. According to their custom, they had pushed on hard all day with only a hot drink of coffee from a Thermos bottle to stay their ravenous appetites.

Leland smacked his lips with satisfaction at sight of the Mexican cook.

"Frijoles!" he ejaculated. "I can almost smell them, hot and savory—and strong coffee! The caretaker will have to wait for his supper until our chink can cook it. You and I are going to take that frying pan by storm the minute I get my feet on the ground!"

At the first streak of dawn, next morning, the young expert from Capitan & Wilder was up and out of doors, eagerly scanning the piece of land that was to test his ability as a professional man. The little shack stood in the center of a saucerlike valley, completely hemmed in by low-lying hills, while beyond rose towering mountaintops in a jagged circle.

The old caretaker at Leland's side pointed to a wooded slope on the highest mountain, and the young engineer traced with his finger on a map the course which the mountain stream was to follow, to supply water for working the mine, and nodded with satisfaction as he identified points on its course.

"The water is always the real problem, after all," he sighed. "The panning doesn't worry me. All that will probably check up all right. Good

morning!" he called, as his client appeared in the doorway. "What do you think of your first sight of a gold mine?"

Prentiss shook his head helplessly. "It could get by me, if it is a mine," he confessed. "Nothing but a valley full of sagebrush, like all the rest of this country, except for those pits dug here and there. Are you going to show me a nugget before breakfast?" he challenged.

"Certainly!" laughed Leland promptly. And then, as Prentiss kicked incredulously at the sandy soil, "Do you see that low place, where the rains have swirled the sand about until it looks like the dry bed of a stream, with alongside a little jagged wall of rock?"

He led the way, and Prentiss, following, peered and poked eagerly into the interstices of the rock. Presently he gave a shout, and digging into a crevice with his penknife, dislodged a tiny atom of gold clinging to a fragment of iron-stained quartz.

The tenderfoot regarded his find with undisguised delight.

"It isn't big enough to make the top of a collar button," said Leland disdainfully. "But," he added slowly, turning the piece over thoughtfully on his palm, "it is an interesting specimen. Do you notice how rough and jagged it is? And it's more quartz than nugget—"

Prentiss stowed the little atom carefully away in his purse.

"You shall not run down my first find in the gold fields!" he protested. "Let's hurry up and have breakfast, and then I'll let the expert from Cappan & Wilder introduce me to a gold pan. I'm as crazy to get at it as a boy with a new toy!"

Toward sundown, Leland, still walking buoyantly, and Prentiss, dragging his aching legs stiffly through the brush, dismissed the Mexican miners and decided to call it a day's work.

It had been a day full of satisfaction for the younger man. He had chuckled inwardly at sight of Prentiss' serious look when the first sample of gravel had panned down, leaving a streak of black oxide and so thin a trace of "color" that it had to be identified with a magnifying glass. He had laughed aloud at Prentiss' excited shout of astonishment when the same stolid Mexican, hours later, giving a finishing swirl to his pan of gravel, disclosed to the amazed eyes of the Boston man a streak of glittering gold that ran for five inches in a thin line around the bottom of the pan.

"Why, it must be five dollars' worth of gold!" Prentiss had cried excitedly.

"It won't go over twenty cents," Leland had said calmly, and had adjusted the little scales that had been backing up his judgment unerringly all day. "We took that pan of gravel near bedrock. It ought to run heavy. But of course it's averages that count. As my figures show to-night, we have gone slightly better than the Fancher report. In the next few days, we shall probably round up an average pretty close to his tests."

The days that followed fulfilled this prophecy. Prentiss forgot his interest in the mine itself in his pleasure in Leland's satisfaction, which mounted hourly.

"I suppose the success of this examination means a lot to you?" the older man asked smilingly one evening, when Leland raised a jubilant face, after adding up a row of figures.

"You bet it does!" agreed the young man fervently. "You see," he added in a burst of confidence, "there's a little girl—the finest little girl in the world! I haven't asked her father yet." He sighed. "If I can go to him straight from a successful job, it'll stiffen up my spine. And I tell you I need all the help I can get!"

"Regular old Gorgon, eh?"

"He is!" said Leland, and then, as the other's eyebrows rose quizzically, "I mean," he added, "he is to me. You see, any man who has to give up a girl like Marjorie is going to grill the young fellow who thinks he can take care of her. It'll be something awful! I'm not afraid of anything but the financial part, and, you see, the chief hinted pretty plainly that when I come home with this job buttoned up right, there'll be a boost in my salary that'll make me look a little less scared when I tell daddy what we expect to live on."

Prentiss chuckled, and Leland returned to his figures. Presently he closed his notebook.

"Mr. Prentiss," he said, "with your permission, I'm going to leave you tomorrow, to carry on this part of the examination alone, with Pedro and José. I want to follow the course of the ditch from its rise in the side of San Jacinto mountain. It's going to be mighty rough traveling. There's no need for you to wear yourself out. Of course the water is the important feature here. I wouldn't give that"—he snapped his fingers—"for the Guadeloupe Mine if the Lord hadn't placed a nice, big stream of water above us on those hills. I've got to make sure the supply is ample, and that there's no obstacle to bringing it in."

He was off, with his burro, at crack of dawn. It was after dark when he returned to camp. Prentiss noticed the tired lines of his figure as he tumbled from the saddle, but he was shocked at the grim soberness in the young man's face. Warrener ate his supper almost in silence and then lay all evening, stretched wearily on his cot, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. The hard ride had robbed him of all his light-hearted buoyancy.

For the first time, a misgiving smote the Boston man.

"You've had a hard day, lad, but you found the water all right, of course?"

he asked finally, when they were about to turn in for the night.

Young Warrener stooped over his boots.

"The conditions—were—just exactly—as they are—described in the—company's report," he jerked out, tugging at his laces. "I'm really all in, Mr. Prentiss. We'll talk about things tomorrow," he begged.

The young man spent a restless night and rose seemingly unrefreshed, his face serious and tense.

"I need another day in the hills, Mr. Prentiss," he said hastily, as soon as Prentiss awoke. "I think I'll take a pack burro and carry a blanket and a few days' rations. I may not get back until to-morrow night."

The older man studied him anxiously. There was an intangible barrier between them—surely not of his own making. All the boyish enthusiasm that had made young Warrener so delightful a companion had disappeared. He was the cold business man, the expert from Cappan & Wilder.

"Pshaw!" Prentiss told himself at last. "The boy is just taking himself too seriously—that's all!"

But the little feeling of uneasiness remained, and dimmed the brightness of the sunshine for him during the time he spent alone at the camp.

It was late at night on the second day when Leland returned. He looked white and haggard, his clothes were torn, and his limping burro showed that they had had a rough trip in the hills. He smiled wanly when he found his client's eyes fixed on him with a mixture of sympathy and concern.

"I've finished my work," he said grimly. "I'm too dead tired to talk tonight, Mr. Prentiss, but I'll be ready to give you my report in the morning. We can start back for Ensenada about ten o'clock."

The lethargy had vanished. Prentiss felt that, whatever the young man's

problem, he had come to his decision. In spite of himself, the older man lay awake long, fighting that little tug of uneasiness at his heart—apprehension for Marjorie, apprehension for the boy whom he had been learning, in the last ten days, to love like a son.

In the morning, after breakfast, a Mexican brought a couple of saddled burros to the door of the shack.

"I'm ready to talk to you," said Leland, "but we'll ride up to the top of the hill on the south here. That is the place where the reservoir is to go, and you should look it over before we go back."

They reached the little eminence in silence. Behind them, after a slight dip, the hills rose higher in tiers toward San Jacinto. At their feet lay the little valley that contained the mine.

"Well, Leland," began Prentiss, determined to have the thing over as quickly as possible, "as expert for Cappan & Wilder, the tests you've made on the mine check up the Fancher report satisfactorily, don't they?"

"Yes," said Leland soberly. "We did a little better. The man who made the first report was undoubtedly conservative. The value per cubic yard, and the depth of the gravel, have been verified."

"Now, about the water," said Prentiss, striving to speak with the same unconcern. "Is there plenty of it, and can it be brought in? You found there was an ample supply?"

"Yes, the supply is ample. I went to the source, and there's more than enough for the needs of the mine."

"And the plan for bringing it in is perfectly feasible?"

"Yes, the plan is feasible."

"And at the expense estimated?" he pursued gravely.

"I think the estimate will cover it safely."

Prentiss drew a long breath.

"Then you've been practically able to verify the report of your firm?"

"Yes," said Leland slowly, "I've been able to verify everything in the report."

He did not look at his client. His eyes were on the distant hills.

"Why, then it seems to me," said Prentiss, catching his breath sharply, still fighting deep in his heart that vague feeling of uneasiness, "that's about all there is to it! As my expert, then, you are able to endorse everything and recommend the purchase?"

"No," said Leland suddenly, and his lips whitened a little as he gazed levelly into the other's eyes, "as your expert, Mr. Prentiss, I'm sorry to say that I'm obliged to turn down the whole proposition!"

"What?" In spite of the alarm in the ejaculation, in the older man's heart was a rush of jubilation. "Marjorie's boy is sound!" he thought exultingly. "What?" he repeated. "Then the water——"

Leland shook his head.

"The water is all right. Mr. Prentiss," he went on miserably, "there's one feature that must always be considered in handling a placer mine. I never heard of a mine before where it couldn't be taken care of in some way. The matter was not mentioned in the report. Of course," he hastened to add, "I'm sure it was overlooked—taken for granted—just—as perhaps your own expert might have overlooked it if he had come on with you. That is what makes it so hard for me," he ended simply.

"I'm still in the dark," the older man reminded him.

"I want you to discover it for yourself; if you possibly can," urged Leland. "Look at the little valley that holds the mine. What is its shape?"

"It's shaped like a saucer," said Prentiss promptly.

"It's not unlike the gold pan with which we made our tests, is it?" pursued Leland. "Now, suppose, having the pan full of gravel and water, we

are ready to tilt it and let the débris run off. In which direction would we tilt?"

The Boston man looked bewildered.

"Why—why——" he stammered.

"Mr. Prentiss," said the young expert, "the first morning I started for the head of the spring, I came up here and looked around the rim of this valley, and had my first misgivings. I felt sure, however, that one of the jagged openings in the mountains must provide an outlet for the bedrock flume. I felt anxious, though, when I remembered how we came into camp. The road would naturally have picked the easiest place, and you remember we came into the valley over a sort of 'hogback,' after a steep climb?"

Beginning to comprehend, the older man nodded.

"In the last three days," said Leland, "I've explored every outlet in the circle of hills. Guadeloupe Mine lies nestled in its little saucerlike valley, with an unbroken chain of mountains hemming it in. The only outlet would be a tunnel so long that the expense of digging it would use up every penny that you could ever hope to take out of the mine. The usual phrase in a report on a placer mine is, 'Dumping facilities are good,' or, 'are not prohibitive.' In Guadeloupe, the matter is not mentioned—and there is no dump!"

"Is there no other way of working a placer mine?" demanded Prentiss.

The young man shook his head.

"There are modern ways of handling gravel," he conceded, "but it would mean the installation of expensive machinery—and you can picture what it would mean to bring it in over the trail we traveled. In fact, it couldn't be done without building a road. And Guadeloupe is neither big enough nor rich enough to warrant it."

"Leland," said the older man gently, "this is a pretty hard blow to you, isn't it? What will your firm say to this report?"

"I shall send in my report and my resignation together," said Leland wearily, "and I don't know how it'll be about getting another job. It all depends on what Cappan & Wilder may decide to say to intending investors when I offer my services," he added, with an unsuccessful attempt to return to his old flippancy. "Six months ago," he finished soberly, "if this had happened, I should have chucked my job, put my little savings into a prospecting outfit, and spent the next few years on the side of Jacinto, looking for the big quartz vein that has undoubtedly been sifting gold down into Guadeloupe the last few thousand years. You saw how jagged the little nuggets were which we found in panning? That means they haven't traveled far, else they would have been worn smooth. And the fact that some of them had quartz attached shows there is a quartz deposit near. But"—he shrugged his shoulders—"this is not six months ago. I'm not free to risk earning a living in so precarious a quest. I've simply got to make good somehow as a salaried man. You see"—he choked a little—"there is the—the little girl——"

His face twitched. He wheeled his burro sharply.

"The men have the wagons ready," he said. "Let's get back to camp, and on our way to Ensenada. Guadeloupe has made an awful mess of things for me!"

Eleven days later, Leland Warrenner, having left his client to pursue a more leisurely trip across the continent, descended from the steps of his train in Boston station. In spite of his impatience, he decided that the state of his finances demanded a street car instead of a taxicab on the last lap of his journey to the home of his fiancée.

A thousand times he had gone over in his mind what he would say to Margorie—how completely he would insist

on releasing her until he had proven himself capable of offering her something worthy. His telegram to her had merely announced his coming, and he had evolved in his imagination a dozen different meetings, and in all of them he had carried himself with brave reserve and iron determination. But when, in the midst of the crowd in the station, he suddenly found her at his side, he lost his head entirely, and the misadventures of his business career were relegated to a misty background, while he reveled in the joy of being with her again.

"We're out at our summer home at Natick," explained Marjorie. "I came in for you in the limousine, with *fräulein*. She will probably," she announced shamelessly, "sleep all the way back, after we get out of the noisy city."

Marjorie seemed to be unable to tone down the happiness of her mood even when he had made it plain that it hurt him to have her treat his disaster so lightly.

"I never could understand business," she insisted, and snuggled closer against his shoulder, "but you can talk it all over with daddy. He's perfectly wonderful about things like that."

"Then your father has returned?" faltered Leland.

"He got in from Chicago a few hours ago. He knows all about you, and is just crazy to see you."

Leland swallowed hard. Then he made a sensible resolution.

"He'll probably forbid me to see her," he reflected. "This ride is the one heavenly thing I'm sure of, and I may as well make the most of it while it lasts. Do you think," he asked Marjorie, "that we might suggest to the chauffeur that he drive very slowly?"

They drew up at last, after sweeping in through wide gates and up under a stone *porte-cochère*. Leland's heart sank as he realized that the girl he loved had been brought up in surround-

ings that suggested unlimited means. In spite of everything, he was determined to keep a stiff upper lip, to face his father-in-law with so much clean, honest, intelligent manliness that he must at least listen to him with respect.

But he was not to achieve even this satisfaction.

Marjorie left him in the library a moment, and when she returned, he heard a heavier tread accompanying hers. They entered the room together. The girl's eyes were dancing, her hand on her stepfather's arm.

Leland gave one look at the man beside her. His jaw dropped. He stared vacantly at the father-in-law he had planned to conquer with a look of manly intelligence.

"You had a round-trip ticket on the Southern Pacific," said Prentiss, as easily as if they had just parted, "and I came home Santa Fé to Chicago, and beat you by just four hours. They didn't try to arrest you for speeding on the way out, did they, Marjorie?" He grinned. "I still have that wonderful appetite I acquired at Guadeloupe, and luncheon has been kept waiting for you two young people"—he consulted his watch and frowned—"exactly one hour and ten minutes!"

At luncheon, his host shoved a folded letter across the table to Leland.

"I sent Cappan & Wilder a long telegram from San Diego, and I found this letter awaiting" me here."

Marjorie left her chair to read it over Leland's shoulder:

"This firm never willingly gives up a young man of Warrener's caliber, but we realize, of course, how much larger a future you can open up for him, and shall not stand in his way if he decides to accept your offer."

In the sideboard mirror opposite him, Leland saw Marjorie, behind his chair, blowing a kiss from the tips of her fingers to the dearest stepfather in the world.



SIGNS

By Bonnie Ginger

Author of "That Morbid Whale,"
"A Ballad of East and West," etc.

MISS MAISIE came back from the phone.

"So, sir, you're to go home at noon."

"Whaddo you know?" Dick grinned.

"And your mother says your little room's all ready, and your bed's by the window, looking on the street. There's a plant, too, and a new game to play till you're well."

"How long'll that be, Miss Maisie?"

"Oh, not so very long. But not right away, either. You know, Cap, that's just what we talked over, isn't it? You're going to have a little patience on top of all that grit you've had—like a hunk of ice cream on top of a slab of pie. 'Oh, waiter! A plate of Dick Fowler à la mode, please!' Oh, dear, Dicks, he's brought broth, instead! But you'll eat it, won't you?"

She insinuated the bowl under his chin. So he ate some of the broth, because you almost always do what Miss Maisie wants you to do, particularly if she smiles and she nearly always smiles.

At first he had been ashamed of having the kid disease—"Polly-oh-my," the nurses and doctors called it—for he was full eleven years old. But, as Miss Maisie had pointed out, lots of older fellows had it, some as much as thirteen years old, and one fifteen. So in time he minded less, and now he had been in the convalescent ward for two

weeks, having after-treatments; and convalescence gives prestige.

"Your mother's got the whole afternoon off to be with you," Miss Maisie added. "Ah, I *thought* you'd like that! And, Dicks, a lady is going to take you home in her big automobile. There'll be excitement in your part of town about noon to-day, hey, Cap?"

A glimmer of zest lighted his freckled face.

"Say, Miss Maisie, *can't* you come, too?"

"Can't, can't, Dicks. Wish I could! But some evening, when I've a night off—the very first time, honest."

She took his hand. He kept it, shyly, and she saw him turn wheedling.

"Well, say—you couldn't finish up that Charlie Chaplin, could you?" meaning the two-reel film she had been narrating when his mother had called her to the phone.

She glanced about and, seeing the ward quiet, she completed the story. His eyes shone, and he was grinning so that Dr. Grote, the young house doctor, who just now came into the ward, said:

"Huh! Dick Fowler sick? Not he! He never had Polly-oh-my! Why, Dick, you came here to marry Miss Maisie, you did! I know. I bet you were planning the elopement right now! Hey?"

"No, sir." He tittered.

"Tut, tut! Can't fool me. But let me tell you, young sir, we know how to manage nurse stealers. We've got a Zeppelin in the back shed, and whenever we find a boy is getting ready to carry off one of our nurses, we just let them start, and then we get into the Zeppelin and fly after them, and we drop chocolate drops as big as oranges down on the street—and of course no nurse can resist chocolate drops—so out she jumps from the taxi—you know, don't you, a nurse won't elope unless you get a taxi?—and while she's picking up the chocolate drops we let down a hook and hook her by the waist, and back we fly with her to the hospital, and for punishment we make her nurse *girls* for two weeks! That's how we do it *here*!"

Dick was now one, wide grin. If it hadn't been for his mother, he almost thought he wouldn't have been particular about noon coming.

But it came.

"Yes, Dicks," Miss Maisie promised again, "the very first time I have a night off, hope-I-may-die! And when you're well, we're going to a big movie theater where they have Charlie Chaplin and a big band and——"

"Chocolate drops," put in Dr. Grote, who had come in to say good-by. "She thinks I'll get them—for of course I'll go along. A doctor always goes with a nurse when she takes a boy to the movies."

"You don't mind, do you, Dicks?" And she kissed him. "So long, kidsy! And remember the ice cream on top of the pie, won't you? Dick à la mode!"

Then they took him away.

In the hall she cried a little. Dr. Grote consoled her.

"He's strong stock. He'll be all right in a year."

"Oh, I hope so! I love 'em all, but, oh, Dicksy-boy!"

"Then it's high time he went, I'm

thinking!" And he said other things, to make her smile. She needed to smile, there were so many boys left to see to.

II.

That first afternoon at home with his mother was just an *entr'acte*, after which began again her business of working out, and his of staying in, and in bed. She left very early the next morning, and now his sister Mamie—thirteen—was his nominal nurse. Nominal not because Mamie was unwilling, but she was much given to passing her time down on the front stoop with other young ladies of her age. Mrs. Potts really looked after him. She was the other tenant on that floor, and she was fond of Dick. And he was very patient.

He could not sit up to look out, but by being turned a certain way on the pillows, he could see the middle of the far end of the block, where three streets met in a sort of plaza, where a horse trough drew many big teams. It was busy and noisy and familiar.

But something else had come into the prospect during his absence that began to interest him most of all.

An old wholesale building had been pulled down, exposing some ancient set-in structures which had provided an ideal soil—to call it that—in which those energetic horticulturists, the advertising people, had planted that quick-bearing crop known as billboards. Now the fruit was in full harvest on its scaffoldings.

One of the boards showed a sky, a field, a lane, a house at the end of the lane, and a range of hills behind. The colors were flat and raw. They proclaimed the purity of Happy Home Flour.

Beside it, a different chord in the human heart was touched. An Oriental gentleman, with much turban, sat a rearing steed, whose agitations were

evidently inspired by the delights and cheapness of the Palladin Cigarette—"One is Proof, Two is a Habit."

Flanking the equestrian was a gray-haired lady in apron and specs, holding up before five graduated children—in size—an enormous cake with one slice missing. The cake was filled with Granny's Goodie Coconut—"Ten Cents Everywhere. Your Grocer Doesn't Keep It. He Sells It."

This gastric chromo was hardly more pleasing, however, than its neighbor, where, on a blossoming bank under very luxuriant trees, a white-wigged, beautiful lady curtsied to a white-wigged, beautiful gentleman, bowing elegantly—both oblivious of the peacock in the background with its tail spread. All this mannerliness extolled Brummel Mixture—"Kwality Kounts."

Then there was a young lady with a tray and two foamy glasses with straws. She smiled almost as Miss Maisie smiled. There was an automobile full of very pleasant folks paying no heed whatever to the white statue and beautiful fountain in the background. How coolly it plashed! There was a goggled young man about to sail away in an aeroplane, but stopping first to drink some Right-spot Rye—"Gives You Poise." There was a boy in a pool below a waterfall catching fish—decidedly catching them—in Nevverleek Rubber Boots. There was a lady in a hammock opening a box of candy, while a golden-haired girl of Dick's own age reached up laughingly, and even the collie beside her showed how confidently he awaited his little bit of U-All's Sweets.

Lastly, there was the huge billboard of a new film spectacle, "The Spider's Web," the Spider being Pleasure, a female resplendent in jewels mostly, at the center of the web, enticing to herself every type, age, and sex of what F. P. A. likes to call the "frequently

human race." It was a colorful poster, with every hue that could be squeezed in by the lithographer.

Of mornings, the light rather glared on these masterpieces, of which some were undoubtedly crude. But Dick enjoyed them. So did he enjoy Sunday comics. But he liked "Treasure Island," too, and many decent things. A boy's tastes are not to be so much defended as accepted. That was Miss Maisie's idea, at least.

One day he had another pleasure. Bob Hayes wrote to him from the country.

Bob went there every summer, and last year Dick had actually visited him for two weeks. So the letter didn't have to be long in order to be interesting. Among other things, Bob mentioned Allie Moss, who spent her summers on the adjoining farm. Plainly enough Dick recalled Allie Moss. She had yellow hair and a low laugh that he still considered to be the best girl laugh of his acquaintance.

So, Mamie being down on the stoop, and Mrs. Potts only in and out between tasks in her own rooms, he would pass the mornings fairly well. Presently a nurse came to give him treatments, and while she was not Miss Maisie, she was nice and jolly, in her way.

In the hot afternoons, his temperature went up, and he was always a little excited and in pain when his mother came home at six. She had to leave again at seven, for a few hours of night work she had managed to get near by. It was in that interval that his body lulled, along with the world outside, when the long summer twilight filled the cobbled plaza, almost quiet now. There was noise all around, but muffled somewhat; even the playing children kept mostly to the streets behind. Through the open doors and across the hall, Mrs. Potts could be heard at her nightly ironing.

And yet Dick was not alone. And presently he was not unoccupied.

III.

They met in the lane, by agreement. Both were barefooted, and the dust was cool in the road, and the morning shadows still long, and the dew sparkling. They had fishing tackle and worms.

As they were passing the farmhouse, Allie Moss came running out, swinging her hat and a paper bag.

"M'lassus cookies!" she cried with her mouth full. "Let me go with you!" And she gave them cookies to entice them.

They told her they were going through the woods and fields. Bob even added the cow pasture. But Allie didn't mind cows or geese or turkey-cocks or anything, and Dick said, "Oh, let her come." And Bob grunted—his mouth was full—and so she went with them over fences and around fields and through swamps and thickets, till they came to the hills; and there in a glen was the waterfall, and the trout pool beneath it.

Such fishing! Dick caught nothing under three-pounders, and there were several four and five and one six-pounder beauty on his willow branch before the sun was halfway to noon. Bob was not quite so lucky, for his biggest trout was a fiver, and of course Allie didn't pretend to compete with them at all, although she made a fine catch for a girl. By that time, they were hungry, so they unpacked the lunch—chicken sandwiches and chocolate cake and oranges—and for drink they had the ice-cold water from the spring at the foot of the waterfall, where a tin dipper hung on a chain.

Being presently replete, and having talked over many matters such as swimming and squirreling and haymaking and the like, they were suddenly aware of a beautiful lady who came along the

top of the grassy bank above them, picking flowers and followed by a peacock with its tail spread. This was Mrs. Thorncliff, from the Thorncliff estate behind the trees. At the same time a handsome man appeared, hat in hand, and he and the lady bowed to each other very elegantly. He was Mr. Losher, of the Losher estate, just east of the Thorncliff estate.

But it was the lady who first saw the three children.

"Oh, see what a wonderful catch of fish they have!" she exclaimed. "May we come down to look at them?"

So she and the rich Mr. Losher came down the grassy bank, and great indeed were their admiration and wonder. Riches do not always mean uppishness. And Mr. Losher could hardly believe that Dick and Bob had caught all those big trout, but they were modest about it, and offered to show him how they did it. So they waded into the pool, while Mr. Losher stood on a rock to see, and Mrs. Thorncliff remained on the bank, holding Allie by the hand.

Then all of a sudden there was a mighty tug of Dick's line, and then came a mighty fight—and what happened you can hardly believe, but all at once there was a seven-pound trout lying on the bank at Mrs. Thorncliff's feet!

Mr. Losher said he simply couldn't have believed there was a fish that size in the county. Mrs. Thorncliff said the same. And then Dick said, "You can have it, ma'am." And she clapped her hands.

"Then you must bring it to the house," she said, "and we'll show it to the company."

So they all went to the big house. Here, by the statue and the big fountain, there was a party going on, and there were many tables laid, and colored waiters in livery were passing around great plates of ice cream and coconut cake and glasses of red

lemonade. But every one stopped eating to see the trout, which was put on a table all by itself, while the men crowded around Dick and Bob, asking them how they did it, and the ladies plied them with refreshments, and took a great fancy to Allie, and said what beautiful hair she had.

They were just finishing their third dish of ice cream when a dark man in a strange dress and a jeweled turban rode up on a rearing white horse.

"Oh, there's the King of Arabia!" said Mrs. Thorncliff. "He's staying at Gablehurst this year, and he often rides over here. He'll like to see the trout, too."

And she was right. He was so pleased that he offered to let Dick ride his white horse.

"Because a boy who can catch a fish like that can surely ride, too," he said—although it was a very spirited animal.

But Dick mounted it easily, and rode it around the grounds and in and out among the tables, so that all the company clapped. And then the king said, "Ride him to Gablehurst if you want to. Mrs. Thorncliff will take me back in her car." So Dick started for Gablehurst, and the king and Mrs. Thorncliff and Mr. Losher and Bob and Allie followed in the great touring car. But the horse went faster than the car.

That was how Dick found the aviator. The aviator was about to get into his aeroplane, but he had paused to drink a bottle of ice-cold pop first.

"Well!" he said, seeing Dick. "So it's you!"

"Why, Dr. Grote?" cried Dick. For the aviator was none other than he.

Dr. Grote laughed his big laugh, and said, "Come on and have a fly with me." And Dick quite forgot the white horse, and next moment he was in the aeroplane. And then he saw Miss Maisie beside him.

"Hello, Cap! We're going to take

you home in the aeroplane. How's that?" And she smiled at him and kissed him.

And Dr. Grote got in, and the aeroplane soared up into the sky and glided over the tops of the highest trees, faster than the fastest white horse, faster and faster—

"Dick! Dickie boy! What's the matter?"

"Oh!" He came to himself and tried to sit up in bed. This he couldn't do, and his mother put him back gently, kissing him. He smiled.

"You were dreaming, Dickie," she said very tenderly.

He nodded happily.

"But I'm glad you came, mother. And mother—I'm thirsty"

It wasn't always the same adventure. It varied marvelously, and sometimes neither Allie nor Bob were along, but always it took form and color from the billboards that faced him from his window, and about which he wove the day fancies that at night became dreams.

And then came reality

IV.

One morning, Mrs. Booning, the lady who had brought Dick home in her automobile, turned up to visit him.

Turning was indeed her specialty—up and upside-down and inside-out. For she was a social deformer. And her first misfeasance was to call Mrs. Potts "my good woman," Mrs. Potts being accustomed to the appellation "lady." Her next was to address Dick as "the little sufferer." Well, well! And her third was to say, "I've brought some flowers from my own gardens in Long Island." It must have been the plural that did the mischief, creating as it did an impression of spacious grandeur in rather too great contrast with the Fowler conservatory—that is to say, the plant in the pot. Still, Dick had not

objected to Mrs. Thorncliff's gardens, so it must have been the tone.

She was a chirping, plump lady, with a large blue eye that strained at the leash to find and pounce upon the objectionable. She was also systematic, for she told Mrs. Potts she had just half an hour to stay, because there were other "little sufferers" to visit. Mrs. Potts seemed to bear up very well under this news.

And then Mrs. Booning said: "Oh, dear, dear! This will never do!" and she brightly carried out to the kitchen sink the three street-peddled—and wilted—roses Dick's mother had brought him one evening. "Unsanitary, you know," she chirruped to Mrs. Potts. She also murmured, "Vulgar!" at the painted glass vase that had held the roses, and set it quite definitely aside. These objects she replaced by her Long Island flowers in a sort of bean pot. Then she straightened the two or three pictures, and exchanged the rocking-chair for a kitchen chair—"More sanitary, you see." And then she sat down in the kitchen chair beside Dick and produced from her bag two thin volumes.

"Now, my dear child, I'm going to read to you. First, we'll have some nature study—a most instructive book, this—and then we'll have some verses."

She held up the volume of verses as if she entertained a partiality for it. It was entitled "Child Poems for Child Fancies," and the fact was that she had composed the poems herself and had them printed at her own expense. Then she set her open watch on the little table and began the "Nature Study" at "The Habits of Rabbits."

And meantime Mrs. Potts, in the kitchen, had rescued the three roses and had put them back in the vase.

"Vulgar, huh? The nerve! And the flowers his own ma brought him! Busybody! If that's what being rich does, thank God I'm pore!"

And Mrs. Booning read cheerily and systematically on and on, while her tiny diamond-studded watch ticked away the minutes. And Dick wondered how so small a mechanism could measure their interminable lengths.

At last, however, the reading ended, and the visitor was through with this particular "little sufferer." She stopped, however, to pull down the blind. And that act so small was fraught with vast results.

Glancing from the window, Mrs. Booning saw the billboards.

"Oh!" she said sharply. "Oh, my gracious me!"

"What's the matter now?" said the hovering Mrs. Potts.

"Those hideous, vulgar things!"

"Things? What things? You don't mean *them*?"

"Oh, dear me, yes! It's quite horrible! Not only morally—cigarettes and whiskies and vampire women—but aesthetically! A pretty pass we're coming to!"

"Well, if that's all that's the matter, I'd say some folks is hard to please," said Mrs. Potts.

Mrs. Booning ignored her. Indeed, she did not hear her.

"A very pretty pass! But—I belong to the City Beautiful Association, and I thank my stars that my membership has not been distinguished by inactivity! I'll see if our society has any say-so or not about the ethics of this city, and whether a lot of commercial ghoulies are to defile every nook and cranny with their low posters! Atrocity is too mild a word!"

Dick knew not the word "atrocity," but he felt her hostility. He stared up at her anxiously.

"I like 'em, ma'am. They're fun to look at."

"Fun? Oh, child, child! There, Mrs. Potts, that's how our little ones are vitiated, brought up face to face with things like that! *But*," and she ges-

tured significantly, "there is a limit, even to *their* freedom! And as I say, I am not without influence in our association." She cleared her throat, to resume her cheery tones. "And now, my dear little Dick, I have to leave. But I'll come every day, as nearly as possible, and at this hour. I'm a busy woman," she added to Mrs. Potts.

"Indeed, ma'am? Well! Now me, I'm not, so maybe you oughtn't to bother coming here. You can just leave the books with me, and I'll read 'em to him. It'll help me pass my time, too."

Mrs. Booning gazed calmly at her.

"I'll come to-morrow. And now, Dick, good morning." And to Mrs. Potts, very steadily, "Good morning."

And come she did, every day at that hour. She always brought flowers, and the same two volumes—"Nature Study" and "Child Poems for Child Fancies." And after changing the furniture about and taking away all sorts of objects pronounced unsanitary, she would set out her watch and, beginning with "Turtles At Play," or "How Moles Make Holes," or the like, she would read on for twenty-five minutes, while Dick tossed and fidgeted, maintaining even a semblance of manners only by remembering what he had promised Miss Maisie.

Now, if Miss Maisie had been there, she would have felt his forehead, and she would have said, "His temperature's too high," and she would have scuttled the "Nature-Study" and the "Child Poems." Indeed, Mrs. Booning felt that he was inattentive.

"But poor little things"—she didn't think of Dick as an individual, but collectively, with all the other "little sufferers" she visited—"they've never been taught beauty! It takes time."

As the second week went on, Dick began to dread his benefactress more—much more—than the medicine he had to take.

It was not only what she did to his

room; it was not only the books; it was the billboards. He knew she was aiming at their demolition, and they had grown to be his pastime and his companions. He could do such wonderful things with them, combine them into such stories. He was one of those children who play the story-telling game in bed—maybe he was going to be a writer—and the lane and the farmhouse, the dark man on the white horse, the pool by the waterfall, and the rest had become as familiar and therefore as convertible, in his fantasies, as the toys he had played, with when he was well. And this woman was going to deprive him of them. He knew she would do it.

He tried to tell her how he felt about them, but she said she would bring him some really beautiful pictures. She did. But he didn't understand them, and somehow her way of explaining was the very way to set a child dead against them.

From the first, there had been warfare between her and Mrs. Potts. On Mrs. Booning's side, it was only tacit, but she felt a desire to vanquish that sarcastic and common person.

"It's her sort of ignorance that keeps beauty from ruling the world," she thought. And therefore it was not without a sense of victory that she arrived one morning, a little late and rather flushed.

"Now what's eating her?" wondered Mrs. Potts anxiously. And Dick, too, had a premonition of imminent evil.

"Well, Mrs. Potts! It's as I thought! You see, I'm a systematic worker. Well, then, I've found that the buildings on which they have erected those moral and artistic eyesores *are all unsafe*, and we have had them condemned! They are to be vacated immediately, and torn down this summer. And the billboards are to be removed *at once!*"

Mrs. Potts said nothing. Neither

did Dick. But when, after her usual sanitation touches and transformations, Mrs. Booning sat down by his bed and propped open her watch and pulled out "Nature Study" and "Child Poems," Dick suddenly struggled and tried to sit up in bed.

"I don't want the old books! I hate moles and rabbits! I hate poetry! I hate your poetry! I won't listen! *I won't listen!*" he shouted, and fell back on the pillows, white and trembling.

Mrs. Potts ran in. She saw Dick and turned on the visitor.

"You'll kill the boy, and then you'll be satisfied! Let him alone, you and your tom-fool beautifulness! Go away with your old books, and don't come back! I tell you, don't come back!"

But Mrs Booning could afford to go, for she had triumphed.

But at Dick's expense, for that very afternoon they began the demolition of the billboards.

V.

He was very tired, for he had been running for hours and hours, looking for Miss Maisie. And he was so thirsty!

Wasn't he glad, then, to see Bob at the pool under the waterfall, fishing.

"Bob! Oh, Bob! Gimme some water out of the spring!"

"Not till I catch this fish," said Bob shortly. So Dick leaned against a tree—a knobby one that hurt his back—waiting.

"That's funny bait." It was a mole. "And why are you wearing a chauffeur's cap?"

To which Bob replied, rather oddly, "They like it better."

Dick pondered this. He also observed that the reel on Bob's pole was an automobile steering wheel. All at once Bob shouted, "There she comes!" And he reeled in, not a fish at all, but a bottle of ice-cold pop.

"Oh, gimme some!" Dick cried.

"All right. But thank your stars first."

Dick pleaded that it would take too long, for there were scores of them dancing around his head, and they all ticked very fast—tic-tic-tic-tic-tic—

"Oh, well, you know best whether you want it or not," said Bob, and threw the bottle of pop into the bean pot. And that made Dick cry, for no one could possibly guess how thirsty he was. That annoyed Bob more than ever.

"Don't be a booby!" he snapped. "They don't like it."

"Of course we don't. It's horribly vulgar!" said a voice from the bean pot. And another said, "A pretty pass!" And Dick, looking into the bean pot, saw the rabbit and the turtle and several other nature studies, all squirming and wriggling in a sickening manner, so that he had to look away again at once. This was unfortunate, for they noticed it.

"He doesn't like us!" said the turtle pointedly.

"Some folks," said the squirrel, "are hard to please!"

"Yes indeed!" chirped a very big, plump sparrow. "To think of not knowing beauty! It's a trocicity!" And they all began to cry, "A trocicity! A trocicity!" very fast and loud, so that Dick had to put his fingers in his ears and to run away as fast as he could, for the bean pot and the nature studies had all got very large, as large as dogs and colts, and they were all gnashing their teeth quite horribly.

And so running, Dick came to a pasture covered with large, dark-brown stones, which squashed in when he stepped on them and were full of white, sticky stuff, like candy, that stuck to his feet. He was wondering what he should do to get it off when he saw Allie Moss sitting on a fence, crying.

"What's the matter, Allie?"

"Oh, Dick, I've called and called, but it won't come back!"

"What won't come back, Allie?"

"The peacock. It swallowed my ice cream!"

"The dirty old peacock!" said Dick indignantly. "Where did it go?"

"Over the hill," sobbed Allie.

Dick said he'd teach it to swallow things that didn't belong to it, and he took Allie by the hand and set out to catch the peacock. But all at once he stopped and began to laugh joyfully. For up on the hill top was Miss Maisie, with a tray and two glasses full of red lemonade, with straws in them. And she was smiling her own smile.

"Hello, Cap!" she called.

"That's her!" said Dick eagerly, and he was pulling Allie along faster, but she held back.

"I don't think much of *her*!"

"Why, it's Miss Maisie, Allie!"

Allie stamped her feet.

"I shan't go another step! Just look at her!"

Dick rubbed his eyes. But without a doubt Miss Maisie was turning very queer. She had a number of long, hairy arms and legs, with claws at the end, and big, bulging eyes.

"Why, she's like a spider!" he cried.

"I should say she is! And if you were a nice boy, you wouldn't have brought me! Ooh! It's coming at us!"

And it certainly was, with big leaps. Allie screamed and ran away. But Dick was rooted to the ground, because of that sticky white stuff on his feet.

"Oh, child, child!" the Spider called down at him angrily. "You didn't have patience! And now you'll have to pay! For you know what *we* do to boys who don't have patience! We eat 'em! Dick Fowler à la mode. And, oh my, but I'm hungry!"

Dick was so frightened he could have fainted. But just then the strangest

thing happened. A head peeped out of the bush beside him. It had a little round hat, and under the hat was a little black mustache and a grin. It was Charlie Chaplin.

He pointed at the Spider with his cane, and then he slapped his chest valiantly and went right toward the spider; and when he got to it, he rapped it on the head, so that it fell down all limp and little, like a burst balloon. And Charlie Chaplin turned to Dick and stood first on one leg and then on the other, and jiggled his shoulders and lifted his little hat, and walked away twirling his cane. And Dick lay and rolled on the ground, for it was quite the very funniest thing he had ever seen in his life. He laughed so hard that when he stopped he found himself in quite a different place—in fact, in the gardens of the Thorncliff estate. And Mrs. Thorncliff was there in a nurse's uniform, and Dr. Grote was there, and Mr. Losher, and a lot of people besides.

Dr. Grote seemed very stern.

"It's most uncommon! In fact, I don't think I've ever seen it before—and I ought to know!"

When he said this, he and all the others looked very hard at Dick, so that Dick began to feel very ashamed of whatever it was he had done.

"You may be mistaken, though," said Mr. Losher hopefully.

Dr. Grote settled that fast enough.

"Impossible! I tell you, it's *most uncommon*! It's not *nice*! No really nice 'little sufferer' would have had it!"

"That's so," said Mr. Losher.

"It's not sanitary," said Dr. Grote.

"Then," said Mrs. Thorncliff, "you'll have to operate!"

"Exactly. Now, Dick, will you tell me what you mean by having a thermometer for a spine?"

Dick felt his spine hastily. But it was only too true; it was a thermometer!

"But I didn't know it, honest, sir!" he pleaded.

"Didn't know it? With the serum running up and down in the tube right under your nose?"

"It's not under my nose, sir; it's behind me."

"Up and down! Up and down!" said Mr. Losher sadly.

"But more up than down," said Mrs. Thorncliff.

They all looked at him so accusingly that he could have sunk through the floor. But Dr. Grote was very businesslike.

"Well, out with it! It's all we can do."

"Oh, will it hurt?" Dick cried, very frightened.

"It's hurting you now, isn't it?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"Then what can you expect? I shall see whether our society has any say-so or not! Bring the hook!"

While they were bringing it, Dr. Grote offered Mr. Losher a cigar. Only it turned out to be a trout, instead. They lit their trout with cigarettes, and puffed clouds of smoke. And just then the King of Arabia got off his horse in a great hurry.

"I rode as fast as I could, really. May I see it taken out?"

"Yes, if you're patient. Go and sit up by the statue. And do put the pictures straight! I can't work till everything's beautiful."

"You know," said Mrs. Thorncliff to Dick, "it never would have happened if you hadn't been rude about the 'Child Poems.'"

"He was *so* rude!" cried one of the poems, who had come to look on. Then all the "Child Poems" came and stood around glaring at him angrily.

It now seemed as if Dr. Grote were growing plump and had a dress on instead of a suit. In fact, he was turning into Mrs. Booning. And now he—or she—said:

"Is all ready? Does beauty rule the world?"

"Beauty your grandmother!" said the statue, which spoke like Mrs. Potts.

"Who asked *you* to speak? Bring the hook! Where's the hook?"

Dick fell on his knees, sobbing and pleading. But Mrs. Booning said to the "Child Poems," "Now, my pets, you shall see what we do to people who are not patient!" And she stuck the hook into his back.

He screamed. And then he must have fainted, for he knew nothing, nothing at all, good or bad or painful or pleasant, until something nice—until his mother kissed him, and Miss Maisie put her cool hand on his forehead.

"Well, Cap! Here you are! Top of the morning to you! How do you feel now, Dicks, hey?"

"Dicky!" cried his mother, kissing him again. "Oh, Dicky! We were so scared!"

"But he's fit as a fiddle now," said Miss Maisie. "We're proud of you, kidsy. Only, aren't you ashamed? A nice one you are, to promise to go to see Charlie Chaplin!"

His eyes widened.

"Yes, Dick," said his mother. "She came last night to see you, she and Dr. Grote—"

"Dr. Grote!" said Dick, feebly grinning.

"Yes, Cap, we did come—and here you were, carrying on and saying *such* things, about stars and rabbits and peacocks and spiders. Such a boy!"

"She nursed you all night, Dick."

"I was glad to do it; your mother knows that. And Dr. Grote's coming to see you. He'll be here any minute. Why, here he is now!" And Dr. Grote came in, smiling.

"Well, Dick," he said, when he had made the examination and pronounced

the patient all right, "do you still like Miss Maisie?"

"Didn't he talk of me in tones of affection?" Miss Maisie cried indignantly.

Dr. Grote nodded.

"Well, then, Dick, what would you say if I told you she is coming to see you every day?"

"Every day?" stammered Dick, his eyes big.

"Dicksy dear, I've left the hospital. He made me."

"Of course I made her. She was getting sick herself. I'll not have her get sick—would you, Dick?"

"No, sir."

"But he can't stop me going to see the boys, Dick. And you were the very first I came to!"

At that, Dick would have blushed if he had been well.

"And now," said Dr. Grote, "you ought to have a sleep—and so ought Miss Maisie. And I've got to get back to the hospital instanter."

So he fixed a medicine, and Miss Maisie gave it to Dick. Then she kissed him.

"Every day, Dicks, every single day! And when you're strong enough, you're going with me to the country for two whole weeks!"

"Mmm—we'll see, we'll see," said Dr. Grote, taking her by the arm. But she only laughed.

"We'll give him plenty to see, Dicksy, won't we, hey?"

"She's a nice young lady, Dicky," his mother said, with wet eyes. Dick smiled up at her.

"Yes, mother. She's awful, awful nice." And he fell into a blissful, dreamless sleep.



THE PLAINT OF THE CITY TREES

(A New York Nocturne)

By D. E. Wheeler

*WHISPER the leaves to the listening dark
Of the things that have come to pass
Since Man has put his deadly mark
Upon the trees and the grass:*

A YOUNG MAPLE

"He has filled our day with dying,
He has made the earth unreal,
Stony monsters multiplying,
With their roots and boughs of steel;
Nature's landscape petrifying,
Leaving nothing that can feel—
Nothing that can breathe and feel!

PINES

"From the rock and iron he borrows
Hardness that his soul enthalls,
So he heeds not woodland sorrows,
Buried in his barren halls;
Dreams his adamant to-morrows
With a thousand granite walls—
Yes, ten thousand granite walls!"

AN OAK

"Fairest works of the Creator
He destroys in ruthless toil.
See him, like a frenzied satyr,
Felling forest kings for spoil,
Till he stands the lowest traitor
Nurtured by our Mother Soil—
Kind, all-giving Mother Soil!"

AN OLD WILLOW

"He destroyed our Indian lovers
As he kills us—but in vain;
Over us their spirit hovers—
Vow of wind and kiss of rain—
Murmuring our rude bark covers
Dust of hearts that live again—
And that we shall live again!"

*Hark to the trees in their whispering moods
As they tell of the blight and ban;
How stone has conquered the ancient woods
And taken the soul of Man.*



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

YOU write plays, don't you? Of course you do. Everybody does. It is one of the most popular of indoor sports, and also one of the most innocuous. It can do no possible harm and, in most cases, no possible good, but it becomes a habit, and life is made up of habits. Actors, managers, and agents read your plays, and the task keeps them busy. I met one little star, the other day, who told me that she read a play every day of her life in the hope that she *might* discover something producible.

What makes the game so exciting for actors and managers is the chance—the ineffable chance—that some jewel will be unearthed. I don't say that play readers expect to discern a Shakespeare, because they wouldn't want one if they ran across him, and probably wouldn't even recognize him, but there is the chance of stumbling upon the one great play. Or perhaps I had better say the one great success, for between a great play and a great success there is a distinction and a difference. You bet there is! Studying the tremendous list of plays I have watched this season—a list that has almost incredible proportions, for theaters have multiplied, and the "cults" have added to the merriment of the game—I feel compelled to tell you who write plays—of course you do, for everybody does—that the one essential to success is the art of being ordinary.

The plays that succeed are not those that set forth a new idea, or advocate a new creed, or make their characters behave like human beings, or instill a praiseworthy lesson, or indulge in propaganda. Not at all. The plays that succeed are those that deal with commonplace subjects in a commonplace way and, as the clock strikes eleven, end happily, with the hero and the heroine setting forth on the high-road to matrimony. I am not saying this cynically or impertinently. I am announcing a fact which a study of the season's successes will substantiate.

You write plays, don't you? Well, beware of "newfangled" ideas if you wish for a happy box office. Just as children love to be "told stories" that they know by heart, and refuse to grow tired of them, so do theatergoers adore the oft-told tale of the hero and heroine who are positively unable—and unwilling—to be happy until eleven o'clock. Very often, the dear little heroine need speak only one word in order to be perfectly blissful at about half past eight, but the public insists that she shall not utter the explanation of her ridiculous scruples until it is time to go home. Mark you, the public knows that explanation. The public is "on." But the idea of prolonging the agony is delightful, and, after all, what play would dare to end at eight-thirty? Why, at eight-thirty, nobody is ready for supper, and

supper is really the dramatic dénouement that makes the theater patronizable.

You write plays, don't you? Well, see to it that they are entertainments above all, with no axes to grind, and no objectionable truths to dally with. Critics often complain that plays are so obvious that criticism is quite useless. It is. They are right there. The very plays, however, that are beyond the pale of elaborate criticism are the plays that audiences dote on. The two biggest successes of the season are Mr. Belasco's "Polly with a Past" and "Tiger Rose," both of which are so ordinary that they scarcely need discussion. Of course, the delightful art of David Belasco in staging these ordinary plays so that they *seem* to be actually novel and inspiring is the critics' stronghold. They are safe when they are reveling in the Belasco art, which is a sure thing. Take, for example, the clock that ticks, ticks, ticks, in "Tiger Rose," and you will find that you have something in the way of detail that is alluring. The art of David Belasco is very real and convincing, and it consists in the delicate task of un-obvious-ing the obvious!

At the present time, a number of persistently well-meaning and interesting folks have revolted from this order of things. They are firmly convinced that the public is heartily sick of the good, the dear, and the unchangeable old stuff, and yearns for novelty. Such nice folks, too! They have formed "cult" theaters, where playgoers may find "something different" if they want it—and, of course, they don't.

I have told you of the Greenwich Village Players, who produced the weird thing called "Karen"—it is incredible that any Broadway manager would have produced it—and of the Washington Square Players, who positively boast that they have produced twenty-eight plays by foreign writers, including "such masters" as Maeterlinck, Ib-

sen, Bracco, Tchekhov, Izumo, Shaw, Wilde, and Molière. Other "cults" have cropped up, and some of the very, very youthful critics—those with a mission, you know, who will gradually and painfully see the error of their ways, poor chaps!—have "boosted" those "cults" until the rafters rang with their ludicrous applause. Often the "cults" have been boomed simply because they were "cults," and if the very same plays had been produced on wicked old Broadway, they would have been "passed up" as negligible.

No doubt many people do weary of the same old thing season after season. I know that I do. Sometimes it is a terrific ordeal to sit through the plays that one knows by heart, by liver, and by spleen—especially by spleen! I go to see the revival of "A Marriage of Convenience," for instance, at the Henry Miller Theater, and discover that nothing of any real beauty remains in my mind but the Henry Miller Theater, which is a most exquisite little playhouse. Still, it is absurd to see the theater through the play rather than the play through the theater, don't you think? In "A Marriage of Convenience," the whole thing is patent three minutes after the curtain has risen. The dear little heroine, married to a man she does not love, proceeds immediately to love him, and nothing happens! It is a Sydney Grundy version of an old Dumas play, called "Un Mariage sous Louis XV," and France itself would smile at it to-day. It served to "present" Miss Billie Burke, who is very pretty and ingenuous and "reluctant"—and the public liked it immensely, I presume.

I go to see a play at the Empire that should be called "Ethel Barrymore," but that, oddly enough, is entitled "Belinda." This is a trifle that is even too innocuous for the public, because what plot it has is so densely illogical. Imagine husband and wife meeting

after eighteen years, to pretend that they fail to recognize each other. He has shaved! In the old days, he wore a beard. Of course, this idea is merely Shakespearean—in Shakespeare, a woman puts on a pair of breeches, and her own mother doesn't know her—but the public, of course, has no views on the subject of Shakespeare, because it has been educated out of them.

I simply loved "Ethel Barrymore" with *Belinda* as the heroine. It was such delicious comedy, and *Belinda* was such a dear! "Ethel Barrymore" was full of comedy, and *Belinda* made the most of her opportunities. It was the light and thistledown trifle that an accomplished actress can "put over." It reminded me of the sort of monologue that Réjane used to revel in—such a play as "Ma Cousine," in which nothing at all occurred but Réjane. Every moment of "Ethel Barrymore" amused me tremendously, but the serious youths could not see it! It was too easy, too unsophisticated, and so unsoulful! Had it been offered as a burlesque at a "cult" theater, it would have been inexpressibly clever.

The very latest effort to get away from the tiresome round of Broadway success, and obnoxious profit—is there anything more terrifyingly horrid than royalties?—was made by the Actors' and Authors' Theater, Inc. Please don't forget the "Inc." They invaded the Fulton Theater and produced a comedy by Arline van Ness Hines entitled "Her Honor the Mayor." This proved to be a somewhat fantastic idea, couched in ordinary theater. By that I mean that all the tricks of the most abandoned Broadway playhouse were used to exploit an idea that seemed to call for more artistic treatment. The central figure of the comedy was a feminine mayor—sometimes called a "lady mayor"—and the playwright wanted to show how splendidly she attacked the

problems connected with rude politics in a nefarious metropolis. Everything was aimed at the sort of popularity that the public loves. There was the dash of "sob stuff;" there was the persistent nobility of the woman, who foiled every evildoer, and did it as easily as rolling from a log; there was the humor-permeated character in full force; and there was the "love episode" that refused to be downed.

This playwright, as a matter of fact, approached the crux of the thing more closely than many imagined. Although she had an idea, she dished it up for the public in the obvious way that critics deplore. She bowed to the inevitable, and she did it gracefully. "Her Honor the Mayor" was not meat for the serious youths, whose dark-green minds find no charm in popularity and despise it as a thing to be avoided, because it respected the conventions, but it was really a clever attempt to combine the obvious with the unusual. This is not an easy thing to do.

I have often thought that the ideal play would be one written jointly by Ibsen, Marcus Loew, and George M. Cohan. The first is unfortunately dead, but he has his imitators, and Marcus Loew and George M. Cohan are still with us, in all their virility. Such a play would appeal to the "minds" that reject the ordinary, and it would appeal to the ordinary who reject the minds. It would solve the problem admirably.

You write plays, don't you? Well, inhale this: Nothing remains to tell the tale of this season but the plays that made a "public" appeal to the public. All the others proved to be merely evanescent. The "cult" plays ran for a short time, owing to their abbreviated clientele, and the thoughtful plays attracted the few thoughtful people who believe that the theater has some object other than that of mere entertainment. This does not mean that these serious plays were failures, but it does

mean that they failed to please the many. Do you write plays for the few, or for the many? Think well before you answer.

At the present moment, the war play is forging ahead, for the reason that managers believe it to be the most essential brand of theater offering. But even in the war play, it is absolutely necessary to be positively conventional. According to the playwright, backed up by the manager, there is no dramatizable feature of this great war but the spy! The whole burden of the war play is the spy, and "The Man Who Stayed at Home" is a good instance of it. Spying and counterspying are the sole points of interest in the war play, and anything else is looked upon as dangerous. The plot must center around either a masculine or a feminine spy. There is nothing else. This is safe, at any rate, but it has grown to be extremely tiresome.

At the end of these plays, everybody turns out to be somebody else. It is absolutely necessary to stay for the last act, which explains everything, and I dislike that very much indeed. The unraveling of the mystery (?) is always exceedingly carefully done, and all the i's are dotted and the t's crossed with alarming precision. Beware of writing a war play in which you have any views at all to expound. Keep to the spies! That is my advice, and of course I am arguing for popularity first of all. I shall not tell you if I personally admire popularity, but I shall assume that you do. I will admit that it is comforting and nourishing, and that with many playwrights who profess to despise it, it is merely a case of sour grapes.

As for the musical shows, they still occur. Summer is supposed to be the precious moment for their ennoblement, but I have not found them lacking in winter. Just now it is the fashion to serve up old successful farces,

that have outworn their welcome, with music, and thus save the annoyance of originating a new book. The latest effort in this line was "Rock-a-Bye Baby" at the Astor Theater, which was once upon a time "Baby Mine," by Miss Margaret Mayo—and a very amusing farce it was.

The popularity of girl and music is admitted, and these even disarm the serious-minded youths. They can always say that criticism is unnecessary—and nobody will admit this more generously than the professional critic—and merely revel. It is a joyous thing to do. I wish I could do it as successfully as I should like to do it. Unfortunately, the musical show usually bores me, unless it possess exceptional merit, and then it is quite unpopular.

"Rock-a-Bye Baby" seemed to be a musical undoing of a clever farce. The action was interrupted by the chorus and the numbers, and just as you settled down to the joy of laughter, you were brought to the solemnity of the occasion by the solo, the duet, and trio, and all the delicious voicelessness that accompanies those outbreaks. For in the musical show to-day, the one thing that is not needed is voice. Composers are very particular about the "business" that goes with their numbers, but they are inclined to regard voice as a detriment to gayety. The girl who can do a cartwheel as she chirups is the *prima donna* in vogue to-day, and the boy, with the gleamingly greased hair, who can kick the proscenium arch is the musical artist who succeeds.

Perhaps the best of the musical shows was "The Kiss Burglar," at the George M. Cohan Theater, which was as clever as a musical show dares to be and as novel as the exigencies of popularity would permit. However, if you write plays—and you do, you know you do—I am quite sure that you do not write musical plays. These are not

written; they are built. They are the work of a collection of people—an evolution, as it were. And they are very expensive to stage. You may perchance possess a libretto in your play trunk, but I should advise you to keep it there, unless you find some radiant excuse for its projection—and I cannot think of any radiant excuse. The man who composes the music has his own pet librettists, and the man who writes the music is a very important person. Perhaps he has written the awful song that makes the night hideous on all the phonographs! That gives him prestige!

You write plays? Then be popular.

Oh, prithee, be popular! With a certain amount of popularity, you can, later on, pay for the felicity of delectable unpopularity. You can write something that you honestly like, and have it produced at some furtive matinée, on some dark-green afternoon, where nobody will see it except yourself and your admiring friends, and you can be quite sure that some critics will write applaudingly of it, and that nobody but yourself and your admiring friends will ever read what they write. Such joys as this can be reached only by the hard and painful road of popularity and strict subservience to the conventions.



THE CHANGELESS ROUND

WHERE is the light that bathed of yore

This pathway through the glade—

The robe of glory nature wore,

Trailing in sun and shade?

And elfin minstrels wake no more

The pipes whereon they played.

O wizard memory! Thine the spell

That, to the inner eye,

Calls up the scenes once loved so well,

Finding in earth and sky

The glow that in them used to dwell,

None other could descry.

Still sudden wonders thrill the air

And in the pulses beat;

Down woodland ways some wandering pair —

The heart's dear lore repeat;

Young faces find each other fair,

And plighted troth is sweet.

Time ever treads his age-long round;

Still morning, many-hued,

Sows faerie fires along the ground

Where they of old were strewed;

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JAMES B. KENYON.

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JAMES B. KENYON.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

THE war figures in several stories in the present number of AINSLEE'S. The hero of Arthur Crabb's clever and intriguing tale, "Eyes," finds a way to serve his country—a fact which is not overlooked by a certain young woman. In "The Right to Happiness," by Lawrence Perry, the ready response of a boy to the call of duty answers a nice question for two of his elders. Then, "A Son of Belgium," by Robert W. Sneddon, is frankly a story of the great struggle over there.

You will like all three of the above. They are good yarns; otherwise, we should not have published them. AINSLEE'S has preferred not to specialize on war fiction. We feel that pure romance is needed as a relief from the grim realities with which the newspapers abound these days, and that only the exceptional story of the battlefield should be given a place in "the magazine that entertains." Don't you agree with us?

Talking about the war, you will be interested to know that Harry Morse Meyers, the artist who did our cover design this month, has laid aside brush and palette to enter the military aviation school at Kelly Field, Texas.

NEXT month, we shall lead off with a novelette entitled "The God of Fools," by Josephine A. Meyer. An architect, high-minded and devoted to his work, is forced to the realization that his wife cares only for the artificialities of life. She has ceased to love him. Her flirtations with other men are hovering on the border line of indiscretion. When he remonstrates

with her, she cynically tells him to amuse himself with an *affaire du cœur* of his own. She tries to throw him into the company of a social butterfly, as frivolous and selfish as herself; but, in the meantime, there has come into his life a woman strong, sane, and understanding. The situation is that of the eternal triangle, but Miss Meyer quickly demonstrates that the story she has to tell in no way resembles the thousands of others that have taken a similar situation as their starting point. Her characters are real human beings. They do the unexpected things—cruel and tender, generous and petty—of which the stuff of life is made. We regard this as one of the best novelettes we have offered to our readers in many a long day.

PREPARE to welcome the return of an old favorite. William Slavens McNutt has written for the September number a new Bill Heenan story, every whit as good as his earlier tales of the Far North. It is called "Bill Heenan, Guardian." The hero undertakes to protect the fiancée of a tender-foot Englishman from a suitor who is almost as much of a scrapper as Bill himself. The tale bubbles over with action and is intensely humorous, too.

Among the other fiction features will be "The Lottery," by Arthur Crabb, which brings a man and a woman together under original circumstances; "The Greater Drama," by Elizabeth Newport Hepburn, author of the fine war lyric, "I Am Too Proud," in the present issue; and "The Street of Lost Memories," by Robert W. Sneddon.



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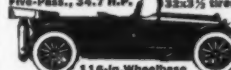
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BY
DAISY AGNEW MacLEAN

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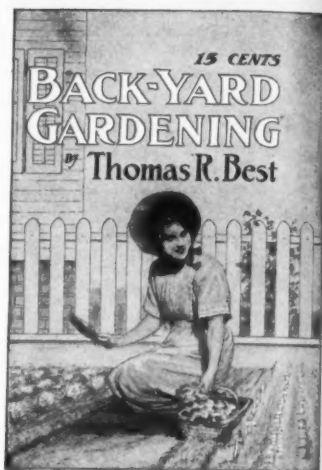
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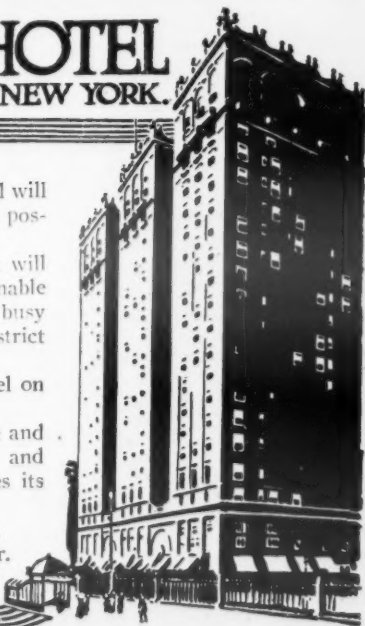
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